

This book offers new insights into the rich and varied Dutch literature of the Middle Ages. Sixteen essays written by top scholars consider this literature in the context of the social, historical and cultural developments of the period in which it took shape. The collection includes studies of the most representative authors, genres, works of the time, and current fields of research interest, ranging from the court and the city to the world of chivalry, the literature of love, religious literature, drama and the *artes* texts. The essays draw on the idea of a common tradition in medieval literature, originating in France and shared by other literatures of western Europe. To facilitate the reader's understanding of the European context in which Dutch literature developed, a comparative chronological survey provides an overview of the main cultural, historical and literary events between 1150 and 1500. A bibliography of English translations of Medieval Dutch works is also provided.

Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 21

MEDIEVAL DUTCH LITERATURE IN
ITS EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 21

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MEDIEVAL DUTCH LITERATURE IN ITS EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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versity Press, 1985), *Marriage and Social Mobility in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Studia Historica Gandensia, 1992), *Under the Spell of Burgundy: the Burgundian State as a European Power (1369-1430)* (provisional title) (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

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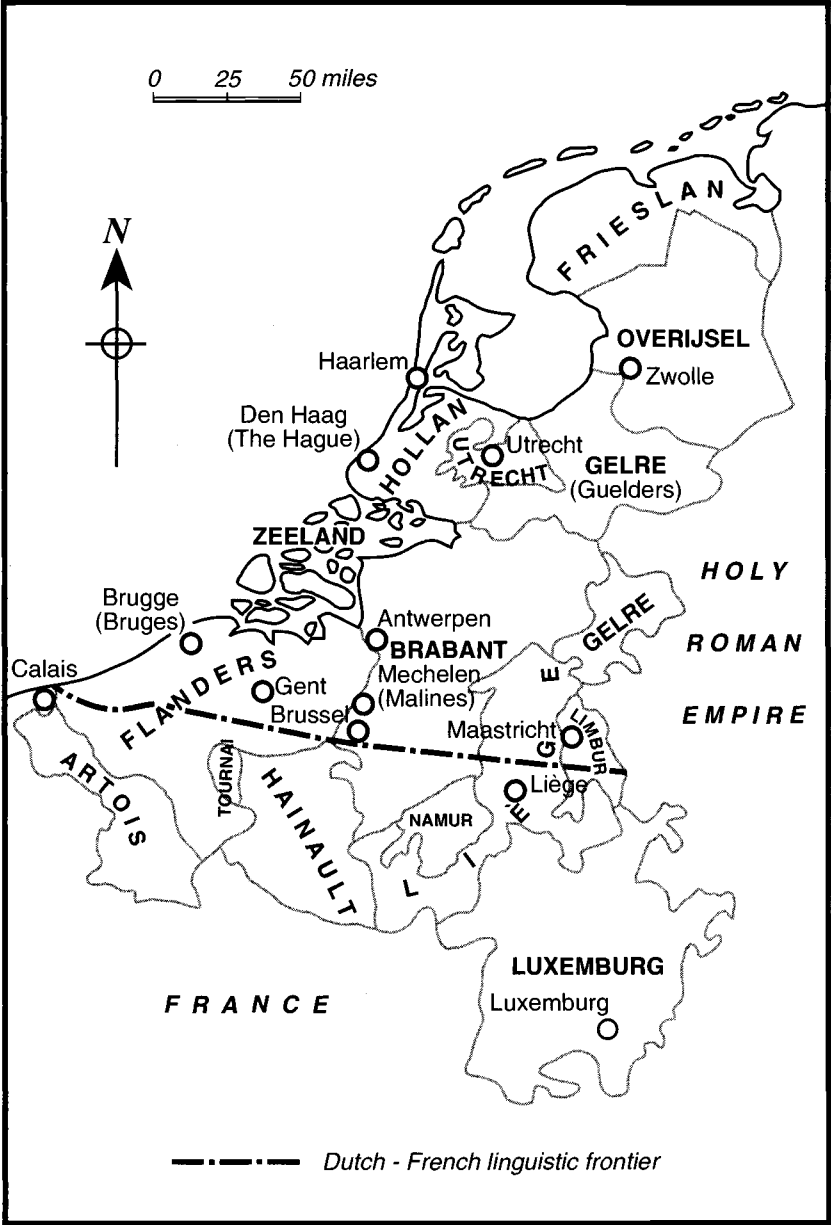
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Preface

No one can hope to complete successfully a project like the volume of essays presented in this book without the help of many people. The subjects were selected in consultation with two outstanding specialists in the field of Middle Dutch literature, Professors W. P. Gerritsen (Utrecht) and F. P. van Oostrom (Leiden), who also helped to draw up a list of contributors; the latter moreover proved an indefatigable source of sound advice during the prolonged period in which the book took shape (most of the essays were written in 1989-90). My special thanks are due to both of them. After the papers had been translated they were all read by Miss Jane K. Hodgart (Cambridge) and it is a pleasure here to acknowledge my indebtedness to her: her expert comments have led to many an improvement, both of the English and of the clarity of the articles. A similar debt I owe the general editor of the Cambridge Series, Alastair Minnis, who, from the moment the idea of this book was first discussed in his office, has shown an unflagging interest in its welfare. Other debts I have incurred are to Dr Evert van den Berg, Dr A. M. J. van Buuren, Mr Koert van der Horst, Professor F. W. N. Hugenholtz and Dr Orlanda Lie, as well as to the editorial staff of Cambridge University Press: Dr Katharina Brett, Caroline Murray, Jenny Potts and Joanna West. The index, a clear must in a book like this, was most expertly compiled by Dr Irene Spijker. Finally I wish to thank the Dutch Foundation for Literature Research and the English Department of Utrecht University for their financial support.

ERIK KOOPER



The Low Countries in the fourteenth century

Introduction

Erik Kooper

In 1288 John I, duke of Brabant (1261–94), supported by, among others, the count of Holland, defeated the combined forces of the count of Guelders, the archbishop of Cologne and the count of Flanders in the battle of Woeringen. Through this victory he settled the Limburg war of succession to his advantage and acquired the dukedom of Limburg. The importance of this event should not be judged from the rather insignificant dimension of the land that was won. For John it meant that he was now in control of all the dukedoms on the territory of what used to be (in the ninth century) Lower Lotharingia.¹ It brought to near-fulfilment the dream of a man who claimed to descend from Charlemagne.² But there was more to it: the annexation of Limburg also greatly enhanced his prestige abroad. The English king, Edward I, was quick to see that John could be a powerful ally in his repeated conflicts with France, and proposed a marriage between his daughter Margaret and John's eldest son and heir, the later John II (1294–1312). The couple were married on 8 July 1290 in Westminster.

The newly established international reputation of the duke of Brabant and the way in which it was won was made the subject of a verse chronicle, the *Rijmkroniek van Woeringen*. In 1290 Jan van Heelu, a friar of the Teutonic order, completed his verse account of this important battle, and dedicated and sent it to Margaret in order that she might learn Dutch from it while becoming acquainted with the heroic deeds of her father-in-law:

Vrouwe Margriete van Inghelant,
Die seker hevet van Brabant
Tshertoghen Jans sone Jan,
Want si dietsche tale niet en can
Daer bi willic haer ene gichte
Sinden van dietschen gedichte,

Daer si dietsch in leeren moghe;
 Van haren sweer, den hertoghe,
 Sindic haer daer bi beschreven –
 Want en mach niet scoenres geven –
 Van ridderscape grote dade.³ (1-11)

(Since Lady Margaret of England, who is betrothed to John, the son of Duke John of Brabant, does not know the Dutch language, I want to send her a gift of Dutch poetry from which she may learn Dutch; with it I send her a description – for I cannot give anything more beautiful – of great deeds of chivalry [performed] by her father-in-law, the duke.)

The self-assurance of the ruler is reflected in the words of the court poet: if Margaret wants to be accepted at the Brabantine court in Brussels, she must try to learn the court's language, which is not French, but Dutch.⁴ And what could be more pleasant than to learn it with the help of an account of the duke's glorious *faits d'armes* at his most recent and most magnificent success?

In spite of Heelu's enthusiasm of his country's and his duke's greatness, his poem is typically a regional chronicle: its outlook is limited to the interests of the duke and of the duchy of Brabant. That the duchy was indeed slightly greater in the eyes of Heelu than in those of even a kindly disposed foreigner like the duke's father-in-law appears from a passage in another verse chronicle written less than thirty years later, Lodewijk van Velthem's *Continuation*.⁵ Velthem relates that, while in Ghent in 1297, King Edward travels to Brabant, 'Siere dochter besien, ende oec dat lant' (To see his daughter, and the country; v.iv.4, 268). He is quite pleased with what he sees of Brussels and with the way he is received, but what surprises him most is the great number of liegemen who held land of the duke. 'Om dit die coninc te blider was, / Want hine waende niet vordas / Dat Brabant waer half so groet' (The king was all the more happy about this because he had never thought that Brabant would be even half as big; v.iv.4, 277-9).

During the Middle Ages the area that is nowadays designated as the Low Countries was divided among at least five major rulers: the duke of Brabant, the counts of Flanders and of Holland, the duke of Guelders and the bishop of Utrecht. The language spoken in all of these lands was Dutch (a cover term for a conglomeration of dialects differing among themselves as much as those in contemporary England or France).⁶ However, literary activities at the time were primarily concentrated in the domains of the first three.

Something else these three have in common is that their lands border on the sea (or have one or more inland ports), and this is undoubtedly at least part of the explanation for why the dukes of Brabant were not alone in their efforts to entertain friendly relations with the kings of England. Also the counts of Holland could be reckoned among the supporters of the Edwards and they too married into the English royal family.⁷ Count William III (William I of Hainault) even managed to ally himself to practically all the important dynasties of western Europe: in 1305 he himself had married the sister of Philip of Valois, the later Philip VI, two of his daughters married Edward III of England (Philippa) and Louis of Bavaria (Margaret), respectively, while for his son and a third daughter he concluded a double marriage with a daughter and the eldest son of the duke of Brabant. Small wonder that William, the brother/father-in-law of the most important European rulers, often fulfilled the function of counsellor or arbitrator to his bickering in-laws.⁸

Throughout the Middle Ages relations between Flanders, a fief of the French crown, and England were of a somewhat delicate nature. As early as the twelfth century the Flemish cities were economically dependent on the wool trade with England. In contrast to the bourgeoisie⁹ the aristocracy was on the whole more inclined to look to France than across the Channel and many of them were French speaking. As a result there were no marriages between members of the English royal family and that of the Flemish counts in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and when, in 1369, Countess Margaret of Flanders married Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy,¹⁰ at least the barons knew where to put their loyalty.

Curious as it may seem, neither the blood relations between the ruling families of Brabant and Holland on the one hand and the English dynasty on the other, nor the close political, financial and mercantile links between the Low Countries and England, nor the presence in England of large groups of predominantly Flemish merchants and of Englishmen in Flanders resulted in any substantial kind of cultural exchange during the period under consideration,¹¹ and least of all in the area of literature.¹² For that England looked to the south, to France, and the Low Countries to the south and the east, to France and Germany. However, unlike English literature, which was influenced by French literature but not vice versa, Dutch

literature was not just on the receiving end. It had its impact in Germany, and even in France it was not without its effects.¹³

The present book is based on the idea of a common tradition in medieval literature, originating in France and shared by the other literatures of western Europe. Its object is, in the first place, to offer new insights into Dutch medieval literature to those who have no direct access to it, and to present these in the context of the historical, social and cultural developments of the time in which this literature took shape. The link with other European literatures has been handled in different ways by different contributors (common traditions, dependence or interdependence, contrast, and the like), but it is always part of their argument. In the second place it aims to give an impression of the range and quality of the research of specialists in the field of Middle Dutch literature. Like their medieval predecessors they have tended in the past to look more to the south (e.g. to Zumthor or to the *Annales* school¹⁴) and to the east (e.g. to scholars like Jauss, Haug, Bumke¹⁵) for their scholarly inspiration, and this is reflected in their work. It is only in recent years that they have turned to the west (e.g. to Clanchy and Minnis¹⁶). Nevertheless, readers familiar with critical literature in the English language will find that at least two approaches, very prominent in American publications in particular, are lacking: so far women's studies and deconstruction have not made many converts among the *medioneerlandici* (which is not the same as saying that scholars are not acquainted with the relevant publications).

Although this book is not a survey of, or introduction to, Middle Dutch literature, the editor has sought to include studies of the most representative genres, authors, works or research interests. They are presented here in thematic groupings and not in a strictly chronological order. Some of the subjects, of particular interest to Middle Dutch literary scholars (like the role of the cities with their riches and their prospering cultural life), will be less familiar to specialists in, for example, Middle English; others have simply been less studied (like the *artes* texts). But Middle Dutch literature is rich and varied and choices had to be made, all the more because (it should be frankly admitted) Dutch and Belgian scholars have no established tradition of publishing in other languages than their own.¹⁷ As a result certain subjects were left out, sometimes out of principle, sometimes merely for practical reasons. Thus the recent book by J. P. Gumbert removed the necessity of a palaeographical and

codicological study of the manuscript material since his work admirably serves this purpose.¹⁸ A decision of a more fundamental nature was not to invite a contribution on Henric van Veldeke: although the original work was written in a dialect of the Maastricht region, all seven manuscripts of his *Eneide* (completed before 1190) were copied in Germany by German scribes, so that no truly 'Dutch' version exists.¹⁹ Jacob van Maerlant (c. 1235 – c. 1288), one of the better and definitely the most prolific author of the Dutch Middle Ages (outdoing even John Lydgate), would have deserved a place in this volume, but as he will soon have a book of his own²⁰ the reader, regrettably, will for the moment have to make do with the brief discussion in F. P. van Oostrom's *Court and Culture*.²¹ What is presented here, then, is not a complete picture of what Middle Dutch literature has to offer, but it is hoped that it will whet the appetite. If it does, it will be due to the merit of the contributors.

At the end of the book, in appendix A, a bibliography of English translations of Middle Dutch texts has been provided; references to such translations are therefore not given in the notes to the individual articles. All translations of the Middle Dutch and other quotations are by the authors (and their translators), unless otherwise indicated.

NOTES

- 1 For this interpretation, see Piet Avonds, 'Brabant en de Slag bij Woeringen. Mythe en werkelijkheid', in P. Avonds and J. D. Janssens, *Politiek en literatuur. Brabant en de Slag bij Woeringen (1288)* (Brussels: UFSAL, Centrum Brabantse Geschiedenis, 1989), pp. 16–99, esp. pp. 23–50.
- 2 See, for example, A. L. H. Hage, *Sonder favele, sonder lieghen. Onderzoek naar vorm en functie van de Middelnederlandse rymkroniek als historiografisch genre* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff/Forsten, 1989), pp. 175–9, and the sources mentioned there.
- 3 Quoted, with a slight change in the punctuation, from J. F. Willems, ed., *Rymkronyk van Jan van Heelu betreffende den slag van Woeringen van het jaer 1288* (Brussels: Hayez, 1836). I should like to thank W. P. Gerritsen here, who, in addition to clarifying the punctuation of the passage and providing its translation, suggested a number of other improvements to the Introduction.
- 4 See the contribution to this volume by Frits van Oostrom.
- 5 Lodewijk van Velthem, *Voortzetting van den Spiegel Historiaal (Continuation of the Mirror Historical)*. 3 vols., ed. Herman van der Linden, Paul de

Keyser and Adolf van Loey (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1906–38), vol. III. His *Continuation* completes the work begun by Jacob van Maerlant: a rendering into Dutch of Vincent of Beauvais' universal chronicle, the *Speculum historiale*. Velthem expanded this with a section on the history of his own time (c. 1285–1315) for which, among other sources, he made use of Jan van Heelu's account of the battle of Woeringen. The *Continuation* is probably the only one of the many Dutch chronicles that is internationally known. It owes this to Velthem's description of the Arthurian Round Table organized on the occasion of Edward I's marriage to Eleanor of Castile in 1254 (for a discussion and a brief summary of this section of the *Continuation*, see R. S. Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast', *Speculum* 28 (1953), 114–27). A heroic posture of even greater size is attributed to Edward III in *Van den derden Eduwaert* (*About Edward III*; c. 1340) by Jan van Boendale, an Antwerp municipal clerk (on whom see also the contribution by W. P. Gerritsen *et al.* in this volume). The subject of this poem is the events that led up to and the first beginnings of the Hundred Years War (Cf. J. G. Heijmans, ed., *Van den derden Eduwaert*. Tekst en tijd, 10 (Nijmegen: Alfa, 1983)).

- 6 In the thirteenth century the southernmost parts of Flanders and Brabant reached into the French language area; see also the map on p. xvi. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the counts of Flanders, who held their lands from the king of France, and most of their courtiers spoke French. For the language situation at the courts of Flanders, Brabant and Holland, see the contributions by W. Prevenier and Frits van Oostrom.
- 7 Count Florens V (1256–96) was a pensioner of Edward I until the latter, in 1296, decided to move the wool staple from Dordrecht in Holland to Antwerp, which was in Brabant. In the same year Florens, who suddenly decided to side with the French king, was murdered by a group of Dutch barons. Whether Edward was involved in that is not entirely clear, but it certainly must have been most welcome to him. In spite of this, Florens' son, John I (1296–99), married one of Edward's daughters, Elizabeth, in 1297. Their son, John II of Hainault (1299–1304), succeeded in reversing Edward's decision about the staple and getting it back to Dordrecht.
- 8 See, for example, F. W. N. Hugenholtz, *Ridderkrijg en burgervrede. West Europa aan de vooravond van de Honderdjarige oorlog*, 5th edn (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1980).
- 9 The great heroes of the Flemish bourgeoisie were James van Artevelde (c. 1290–1345) and his son Philip (1340–82).
- 10 The marriage put an end to the hopes of Edward III to marry her to one of his sons.
- 11 An exception in the field of architecture is the Knights Hall in The Hague, built under Florens V, which was inspired by Westminster Hall.
- 12 See the quotation in Frits van Oostrom's contribution (p. 38), stating

that some English books from a bequest in Holland in the early fifteenth century (including a Chaucer manuscript) were sold to an English merchant because there was no interest in them. The first certain case of a Dutch source for an English text is Caxton's *Reynard the Fox*.

- 13 See the contributions by Frits van Oostrom and Frank Willaert.
- 14 Paul Zumthor is probably best known for his *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). The most prominent members of the *Annales* group are Georges Duby, Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie.
- 15 Some of their works are: Hans Robert Jauss, *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur: gesammelte Aufsätze, 1956–1976* (Munich: Fink, 1977), and *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti. *Theory and History of Literature*, 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Walter Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter: von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985) (an English translation of this is in preparation: *Literary Theory in the German Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press)); Joachim Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter: die Gönner und Auftraggeber der höfischen Literatur in Deutschland, 1150–1300* (Munich: Beck, 1979), *The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages*, trans. W. T. H. and Erika Jackson (New York: AMS Press, 1982), *Courtly Culture*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
- 16 M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066–1307* (London: Arnold, 1979); A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988).
- 17 Of course there are numerous exceptions to the rule, as the references in the notes will show. Brief surveys of Middle Dutch literature in English may be found in books by two former professors of English language and literature in the University of London: Theodoor Weevers, *Poetry of the Netherlands in its European context, 1170–1930*, illustrated with poems in original and translation (London: Athlone Press, 1960), pp. 7–63 (chapter II, 'The Netherlands in Medieval Literature'; chapter III, 'The Medieval Drama in the Netherlands'), and Reinder P. Meijer, *Literature of the Low Countries. A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium*, 2nd edn (The Hague and Boston: Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 1–71 (vol. I, 'The Early Stages. Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries'; vol. II, 'Instructors and Entertainers. Fourteenth Century'; vol. III, 'Rulers and Rhetoricians. Fifteenth Century'). Nevertheless, a book-length English introduction to the subject is still sadly lacking. Readers interested in the literature of the Golden Age should consult the following study: Maria A. Schenkeveld, *Dutch Literature in the Age of Rembrandt: Themes and Ideas*. Utrecht Publications in General and Comparative Literature, 28 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1991).
- 18 J. P. Gumbert, *The Dutch and their Books in the Manuscript Age*, The Panizzi Lectures 1989 (London: The British Library, 1990). As indicated

by its title, this booklet is limited to the manuscript material of the northern Netherlands. For a study of the relation between the literary text and the accompanying illuminations, see F. P. van Oostrom, 'An Outsider's View', in Koert van der Horst and Johann-Christian Klamt, eds., *Masters and Miniatures. Proceedings of the Congress on Medieval Manuscript Illumination in the Northern Netherlands (Utrecht, 10-13 December 1989)*. Studies and Facsimiles of Netherlandish Illuminated Manuscripts, 3 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1992), pp. 39-49. Also for pragmatic reasons the idea of a study of the Dutch *Elckerlijc*, whether or not in relation to the English *Everyman*, was abandoned: the subject has already received much attention, both in Dutch and in English, and beside this there is now a new edition of the two texts, with a literal translation into Modern English of the *Elckerlijc* (see appendix A).

- 19 This explains the interests of Germanists in this text, who often consider it the earliest German romance.
- 20 By F. P. van Oostrom (in preparation).
- 21 *Court and Culture. Dutch Literature, 1350-1450*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans, with an Introduction by James H. Marrow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

PART I

Court and city

CHAPTER I

Court and city culture in the Low Countries from 1100 to 1530

W. Prevenier

The genres of chivalric romance and courtly lyrical poetry existed in Europe continuously from the twelfth-century troubadours onwards up to and including the sixteenth-century Italian humanists, thanks to the centuries-long patronage of an impressive list of rulers in France, England, Italy and elsewhere.¹

The Low Countries do not seem to have diverged much from this model. Among others, the courts of the Flemish Count Philip of Alsace in the twelfth century, the dukes of Brabant, Henry III and John I, in the thirteenth century, the count of Holland, Albert of Bavaria, at the end of the fourteenth century, and the Burgundian duke Philip the Good in the middle of the fifteenth century, were thriving centres for music, plastic arts and literature. It was not until the end of the fourteenth century that we find, in Brussels, the first bourgeois patrons.² Only around 1300 do city-dwellers turn up in large numbers as readers of didactic treatises that were explicitly written for them.³ The complete breakthrough of bourgeois themes would only come about with the literature of the rhetoricians of the fifteenth century, which was produced for the well-to-do bourgeoisie.⁴

For city-dwellers of the lower social classes there was a parallel development of popular culture from the fourteenth century onwards, based on the work of street poets and leading to the fifteenth-century Shrove Tuesday plays and the sixteenth-century chapbooks.⁵ Notwithstanding the existence of bourgeois literature, well-to-do city-dwellers, hoping to derive some social prestige from association with the social circles just above them, were not prevented from being charmed by chivalric literature and courtly lyrical poetry throughout the fifteenth century.⁶

These patterns of behaviour raise certain questions. Indeed, they can only be understood in the context of the very specific circumstances of the Low Countries. Politically, they belonged in the ninth century to the unitary Carolingian empire. When this structure collapsed in 843, two great medieval nations, France and Germany, developed from its ruins, as well as a number of smaller principalities such as the counties of Flanders, Holland and Artois, the duchy of Brabant and the diocese of the prince-bishop of Liège. In feudal-legal terms these owed allegiance to the French or German rulers, but in practice this power structure was largely fictitious and the territorial rulers conducted an all but autonomous policy. The Flemish Count Philip of Alsace (1168–91) enjoyed an international prestige that was in no way inferior to that of a contemporary king. The principalities of the Low Countries were independent ‘mini-states’ with a highly developed sense of national identity, of which the respective dynasties were the visible sign. They did not form a political unity, but there was so much economic and cultural exchange among them that, in these areas of activity at least, they were considered by the rest of Europe to be a specific and homogeneous entity.

The flexibility which the Low Countries displayed in opening up to other European cultures was encouraged not only by these multi-lateral trade relations but also by the linguistically mixed character of the territories. In Liège, Brabant and Flanders speakers of French and Dutch lived together. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the southern half of the territory of the count of Flanders, that is Walloon-Flanders and Artois, was French speaking. Even in the northern part French was the daily and cultural language used by an important part of the city elite.

The socio-cultural behavioural pattern of the population of the Low Countries, more particularly the belated budding of a bourgeois culture, still seems strange when one realizes that this area, together with northern Italy, was the most urbanized region in Europe. In the fifteenth century, more people lived together in cities in the Low Countries than anywhere else in the world: up to 36 per cent in Flanders and 45 per cent in Holland.⁷ The number of cities was considerable as well. Among them were large-scale centres that

could rival the size, level of development and self-awareness of the Italian metropolises. Their greatest demographic and economic growth, at least in Flanders, took place before 1300. Between 1100 and 1300 they established fully fledged political structures in the form of benches of aldermen with administrative, juridical and financial authority founded on autonomous charters. All this had occurred at the expense of the central authority (the count). There is a huge paradox here: the cities of the Low Countries were on their way to maximal expansion towards 1300 but culturally those cities were rife with chivalric romanticism and courtly minstrel poetry at the very moment that the nobility was on the wane in socio-economic terms.

A simple explanation might be that the bourgeois elite was preoccupied to such an extent by economic factors during the most dynamic phase of its ascent (1100–1300) that it participated very little in the political and cultural aspects of life. And indeed, in the years between 1100 and 1300 the centre of political decision-making was the count and his *curia comitis* in Flanders and in Holland. Counsellors and other top officials were almost exclusively clergymen and noblemen; only around 1300 did burghers, because of their economic significance and technical superiority, begin to penetrate this exclusive circle. This is the familiar process of ascendancy of university-trained legal technocrats and of financial specialists.⁸ However, although this picture is true for policy-making at the level of the central state institutions, it is untrue at the level of the cities themselves, which had had their own political structures since the twelfth century. What is more, the bourgeois elite had made its mark as a group of political importance in Flanders as early as 1127. It had been so successful in this that it was able to act as an opponent to the central authority and as such had a fundamental impact on the succession problems of the time. The united front of the cities developed throughout the thirteenth century as a political pressure group alongside and often against the count.⁹ Is it conceivable that this city elite, which was so energetic politically and economically, would have achieved nothing in the cultural-intellectual sphere? I think they did have a need for a socio-cultural image of their own. I deduce this from the creation in Ghent of their own municipal schools as early as the twelfth century and from the emphasis on the needs of a commercial public in the tuition offered by the abbey of Saint Peter at the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ I even suspect that

the proud patricians' stone houses, town halls and monumental churches can also be considered as a manifestation of the power and ambition of the cities.

On the other hand there is a recent trend in literary studies that strongly underestimates the literary interest of the burghers, in both Old French and Middle Dutch literature, before 1300. The reason for this can be found in a methodological shift of emphasis in the reconstruction of audiences (i.e. the working out of the intended readership of a book from the various social groups that are criticized, or not criticized, by the author), towards the determination of the patrons who ordered the books.

The Middle Dutch *Reinaert*, inspired by the Old French *Renart* and preserved in Flanders in a thirteenth-century version, was until recently generally considered to have been written for the Flemish bourgeoisie, since this was the only social group not attacked by the author.¹¹ However, both the Old French¹² and the Middle Dutch versions¹³ are now said by some philologists to have been written with the nobility as the intended audience instead of the bourgeoisie of Arras or Flanders. More generally too, it was strongly posited a few years ago, out of an understandable need to counter the dominant opinion in favour of a bourgeois audience, that much of the patronage and interest in Middle Dutch literature should be looked for among the nobility. At least part of the arguments that have been used in support of this hypothesis fails to convince.¹⁴

My first reply is that urban *patronage* in the Low Countries is indeed absent from the *sources* until well into the fourteenth century. But does this mean it was absent in reality? On the one hand, the archives and chronicles of the princely courts, which allow us to observe the activities of patrons, can be traced back to the twelfth century. But with respect to the city records there is much less evidence since the custom of keeping, or the obligation to keep, written records of the city accounts, in which grants to artists might have been noted down, only started towards the end of the thirteenth century. In addition, both Ghent and Bruges during this period were struck by fire that completely destroyed the older archives. With regard to the private patronage of burghers the confusion is even greater: barely three merchant-accounts survive

from before 1500. In other words, the chance of traces of urban patronage surviving is much less than of those of princely patronage.

My second reply is that we should not too quickly deduce from the absence of city *patronage* before the middle of the fourteenth century (if the latter is indeed the case) that writers could not have been aiming at a city *audience*. It is a mistake to discount this audience. If we only extend our horizon southwards towards Artois, which in the twelfth century, at the beginning of our story, was politically dependent on the count of Flanders, the situation was already very different. In fact, in the city of Arras in the thirteenth century we find the whole range of activities that are considered characteristic by present-day literary researchers of the Low Countries in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Arras had literary societies that were established by, and were active on behalf of, burghers and were even socially differentiated. On the one hand there was from about 1258 onwards an elitist society-club named 'Le Puy', which was comparable to the later chambers of rhetoric, and on the other hand there had been from before 1194 a more popular *confrérie* (fraternity) for *jongleurs*, comparable to the later ironic-critical popular theatre and Shrove Tuesday plays. Even if, as has been correctly remarked, part of the impulse for their activities came from outside, more particularly from courtly circles, these clubs, of which every Arras burgher with any self-respect was a member, prove at least that many city-dwellers participated in this rich Arras literary life and even paid for it. Adam de la Halle and others were paid by the *confréries*.¹⁵ This early bourgeois patronage should not surprise us. In Arras lived many well-to-do textile merchants and enormously rich money-traders, such as the Louchart and the Crespin families. As early as the thirteenth century the town even boasted the phenomenon of retired people, the *otiosi*, a leisured class of people who, just like the nobility at the princely courts, were rich enough to be avid cultural consumers.¹⁶ The fact that Adam de la Halle presents more shepherds and knights than burghers in his plays in no way implies that he wrote for a noble audience. Literary sociology has proved the existence of so-called compensation fiction, in which readers escape into a dream world in order to lessen the existential tensions of the real world around them.¹⁷ In addition there is the phenomenon of imitation behaviour, in which well-to-do burghers imitate

behavioural patterns of the nobility in order to distinguish themselves from the city populace. Moreover, in the more light-headed Arras *Chansons* of the thirteenth century the bourgeois class is indeed often the central theme, both in terms of admiration for their economic success stories and in terms of critical-satiric reflections on the immorality of fiscally fraudulent businessmen or sexually frivolous bourgeois ladies of Arras.

Why do we not find an analogous cultural pattern in the cities of the Low Countries of the thirteenth century, even though the social make-up was comparable? In the case of Brabant and Holland, particularly the latter, we can attribute this to the fact that their economic growth began comparatively late. Flanders remains a problem because its economic development is synchronous with that of Artois (even though the latter ceased to belong to the Flemish count from 1191 onwards), and even the sociological phenomenon of the *otiosi* is already present in thirteenth-century Ghent. Tuition in the abbey of Saint Peter was orientated just as much towards the *bonne education* of the burghers as that in Arras. Was there really nothing in Ghent, or is it the arbitrary lack of witnesses that is the problem?

There are yet more considerations to make us doubt the hypothesis that, up to 1350, patrons and consumers were essentially of noble origin. It is clear that neither this thesis nor my own arguments can be conclusively proved by hard evidence. In this respect, however, it is impossible not to mention the intriguing switch from Latin to the vernacular for literary purposes. In the Low Countries this happened at the Flemish court shortly after 1169, when Philip of Alsace ordered French material from a *jongleur* and later from the renowned Chrétien de Troyes.¹⁸

At the Brabantine court, this shift took place under Henry III (1248–61), whose favourite minstrel, Adenet le Roi, was later also active at the Flemish court of Gwijde of Dampierre.¹⁹ Dutch was introduced as a literary language at the court of Flanders between 1238 and 1244, in Brabant under John I (1267–94) and at the Holland court under Florens V (1266–96).²⁰ Notwithstanding these cases, the changeover was not a phenomenon exclusive to the princely courts. The rich Arras literary life, described above, certainly owed its wide social success from the very beginning of the thirteenth century onwards to the fact that it took place in the French vernacular. Language shifts are always connected with

patterns of social change. The introduction of French as the language of charters in the Low Countries from about 1194, and that of Dutch from about 1210 and on a large scale from about 1250,²¹ is undoubtedly an epiphenomenon of a 'democratization' process. At first this was essentially a development that took place in a city context; naturally then it began in the early-urbanized Flanders region and only then happened in Holland and Brabant.²² The new layman-writers forsook the hermetic Latin language of the clerical chancery clerks of the twelfth century for the much more accessible vernacular in order to meet the wishes of ever-wider social groups which, now that they were ready for writing and reading, wanted to understand the terms in which the transactions of their goods were couched.

It is clear that vernacularization started earlier in the literary sector. With French it probably began at the courts (Flanders, about 1169), but it caught on in the cities shortly afterwards (Arras, about 1190). With Dutch the chronology is more difficult to construct because many works have been preserved only in the form of later copies. The date of their composition may have been long before the date of the extant texts. Whatever may have been the real situation, it seems that the oldest preserved manuscripts originate from the Limburg–Lower Rhine area. The earliest are Heinric van Veldeke's *Sint Servaes* (c. 1170), and *The Voyage of Saint Brandane* at the end of the twelfth century, while documents from the rest of the Low Countries followed only in the second half of the thirteenth century.²³ The latter remark is a deceptive falsification of perspective, however. The oldest manuscript tradition of the *Reinaert* goes back to 1260–80,²⁴ but on the evidence of some archaic spellings it can be said that these fragments must have been edited around 1237, and on that of the content and the allusions that they may go back to the beginning of the thirteenth century. Some researchers date them even as far back as 1185–91.²⁵

It would be very strange, in my opinion, if on the official level in the Low Countries there could have been a city audience and a non-aristocratic country population that as early as about 1200 had successfully voiced their need for charters in an understandable vernacular language, and that yet there was no similar interest in the literary sector. Equally strange is the idea that this situation could only have obtained in neighbouring Artois from about 1200

onwards. I therefore suspect that the introduction in the Low Countries of vernacular literature from the twelfth century onwards, by analogy with that of the charters, is equally connected with a real increase in readership. The abandoning of Latin, which was accessible only to court officials with a clerical education, in favour of French at the Flemish court of Philip of Alsace (c. 1169) was an opening towards the wider noble circles that were also regular visitors at the court. The fact that Count Philip chose French and not Dutch has to do with the fact that he was used to French as his household language, that his literary interests, through his family connections with the courts of Champagne and Aquitaine, were strongly influenced by the then fashionable French troubadours, and by the fact that the whole European nobility, including that of Flanders, was fascinated by French epic literature and lyric poetry. This remained the case throughout the thirteenth century.²⁶

What, then, of the readership of the Dutch literature that surfaced at the end of the twelfth century in the area of the river Maas (Veldeke) and presumably somewhat later in Flanders (*Reinaert*)? There is hardly any reason to consider the nobility as the primary target audience. The *Reinaert* existed in French before it was adapted in Dutch and circulated in the Low Countries. Noblemen and clergy did not need the Dutch version.²⁷ There must, therefore, have been a new target audience, in addition to the traditional one.

But just as the burghers should not be discounted as readers of courtly literature, for example the Arthurian romance, so the aristocratic and clerical readership should not be considered unlikely readers of, for example, the French or the Dutch *Reinaert* (the compensation function of fiction may well have been in operation here too), even though *Reinaert* is a particularly critical parody of courtly circles. Nor would I want, retroactively, to deny bourgeois and non-aristocratic readers the enjoyment of those extremely cynical passages in which the author, with a very specific wink at the bourgeoisie, deals with the little dog Courtois (= courtier!) because it speaks French in and out of season – an explicit reference to the Flemish nobility's cultivating French, from the twelfth to fifteenth century, as the language of culture.²⁸ It was industriously imitated in this by the city elite of Ghent and Ypres, which therefore, just like the bourgeoisie of Arras, had free access to the French chivalric romances and courtly poetry.²⁹

The odds are that the social basis of Dutch was broader in Brabant and Holland than in Flanders. French had less impact there than in Flanders and its influence on the elite was much less. This might explain why in the last quarter of the thirteenth century the courts of Brabant and Holland seemed to promote Dutch culture more than the Flemish court did. Guy of Dampierre (1278–1305) and the Flemish urban upper class were indeed strongly orientated towards French literature. This contrast, however, should not be overestimated, as it is possible to cite counter-examples from earlier in the thirteenth century. Countess Joanna of Flanders (1205–44) commissioned not only a French but also a Dutch version of the *Aiol* (1238–44), while the patronage of the duke of Brabant, Henry III (1248–61), was essentially of French troubadours, and the Brabantine court under Wenceslas concentrated just as much on French culture.³⁰

The rise of an audience in the Low Countries for vernacular literature, French and Dutch, as early as 1170 can be ascribed essentially to the growing cultural hunger of the nobility and to a better-educated bourgeoisie that was becoming emancipated economically as well as intellectually. This kind of literature may have had many promoters. At the Flemish court of the twelfth century, the flair of the count and his stylish courtiers, who liked to show off all that was in fashion with the French intellectuals, played a part. In the cities we can assume that clever and creative *trouvères* and *jongleurs* successfully angled for this new public. At the courts of Brabant and Holland at the end of the thirteenth century the switch to the vernacular may have been part of a new propaganda strategy. Much of this court literature had the explicit function of legitimizing the dynasty or certain families. Examples are Jan van Heelu's report (c. 1290) of the role of the duke of Brabant and the Wezemaal family in the battle of Woeringen and Melis Stoke's report (1278–82) about the Carolingian lineage of Florens V.³¹ Is it too far-fetched to suppose that the shift to Dutch was intended to convince the bourgeois political elite, who now participated in political decision-making, and even the bourgeoisie in its broader sense, that the political intentions of the ruler were perfectly adapted to the welfare of these social groups?

Is not the reputed lack of urban patronage and of an urban audience before the fourteenth century a figment of the imagination resulting

from the conviction that the diverse social groups, especially the nobility and the bourgeoisie, necessarily and consistently read different types of literature because they moved in different mental circles, because their interests were contradictory, because they had no common ground? In my opinion, this theory is refuted by the observation that in the most successful phases of court patronage the overall level of creativity in the cities was also very high.

The years 1430–70 mark the undisputed heyday of patronage by the Burgundian dukes in the Low Countries. At his court Philip the Good patronized internationally acclaimed painters (Jan van Eyck), musicians (Guillaume Dufay) and writers (Georges Chastelain). Simultaneously, the Low Countries, according to all economic indications, experienced an exceptionally high economic boom in those years, and between 1400 and 1475 the volume of overall trade in the region doubled. Dynastic diplomacy and the urban economy had their own internal dynamics, of course, and phases of success do not necessarily have to coincide. In this case, however, the inter-relationship is obvious. Philip the Good wanted to confer a high profile on the Burgundian state in order to achieve its admission to the club of European ‘top nations’. His patronage, along with his prestigious marriage in 1430 and the creation of the order of the Golden Fleece, was a suitable means to that end. This desired image was strengthened by a new policy of independence with regard to the superpowers. The peace policy in its turn was the obvious condition for an intensification of international trade. And it is here that the Flemish, Brabantine and Holland cities were able to achieve a success never experienced before by offering, besides the traditional luxury textiles, a wide range of artistic products. The prestige of their offerings was heightened tremendously by the aura which these works of art had acquired at the Burgundian court and from there at the European courts. Concrete involvement was what mattered then in artistic circles. Jan van Eyck worked for the duke *and* for the Ghent family of patricians Veyt-Borluut, Rogier van der Weyden for the chancellor and other top collaborators of the duke *and* as city-painter at Brussels.³² In other words, the ruler and the cities participated in a common political, economic and artistic dynamism.

When the Flemish Count Philip of Alsace started out as a patron of courtly literature around 1169, he was at the same time one of the

first in Europe to lay the foundation of a modern, centrally structured government. He did this by the introduction of untenured civil servants (bailiffs) and the breaking-up of the monopoly of purely feudal juridical structures via new ideas based on Roman Law originating from the university of Bologna. This juridical-intellectual creativity, however, also caused the Flemish cities to break with feudal institutions by means of modern city charters. The industrial and commercial explosion of these cities created a material prosperity in Flanders from which Count Philip drew the means and ambition to play a political role on the European stage. In exchange, the cities claimed the right to solid autonomous official and juridical structures and co-operation in the building of an economic infrastructure (such as ports).³³

Common, ideological starting-points led to a stronger count as well as to stronger urban structures at the cost of the feudal tradition. The interests of the court and the urban elite at the time ran parallel, both politically and socially. In the twelfth century there are no traces of parallel patronage by the count and the urban elite as there are under Philip the Good. But shortly after Philip of Alsace, when the sources are somewhat easier to find, exuberant literary interest is to be found in a typical urban audience in neighbouring Arras.

The common ground between noble and bourgeois 'circles' at the time was not yet mainly the princely court, in which city-dwellers participated only to a small degree. But in the twelfth century, court and city circles moved in the same cosmopolitan societies, so that mutual ideological and artistic stimulation cannot be excluded. Philip's cultural interest was fed on his father's side by contacts with German culture and on his mother's side by the thriving courtly activities in the Aquitaine of Eleanor and via contacts with the equally stimulating court life of her daughter Mary of Champagne at Troyes. Also in Champagne were located the famous annual fairs where so many Flemish merchants established business relations – and why not other relations as well? – with the local businessmen and with the many Italians.³⁴

It was not only to French- and German-speaking Europe that the Flemish counts, noblemen and representatives of the cities had easy access. In the thirteenth century there also existed an anglophile party among the Flemish nobility. Philip of Alsace and his prime minister often met top English politicians. At the same time, English

and Flemish merchants met each other just as frequently, so that here as well a curious parallelism existed.³⁵

Thanks to the European ambitions of the princes of the Low Countries, thanks to the busy, active trade of the Flemish merchants (at least until 1300) and thanks to the many Italian, English, German, Spanish and other colonies which took root in the cities of the Low Countries (especially after 1300), the Low Countries were the ideal place for a microcosm of European cultures to develop. The princes' and merchants' command of both a Germanic (Dutch) and a Romance language (French) not only facilitated good commercial contacts but also allowed them easy access to the other cultures.

A second common ground for the aristocratic and urban elite was to be found at home. The patricians of the thirteenth-century cities of the Low Countries distinguished themselves from the *gemeen* (lower classes) not only by their wealth, by their status as owners of city land, and as members of a group who monopolized international trade, but also by the use of social-status symbols. In essence, they imitated the patterns of life of the nobility: they wore specific, rich clothing, they lived in houses of stone instead of in wooden houses, and they aspired to marry into families of the nobility or at least of the patriciate.³⁶ We can easily imagine that this type of urban elite flirted snobbishly with the romances of chivalry, made accessible to them by increasing use of the vernacular. The thirteenth-century Artois and Flemish cities already knew the phenomenon of merchants living off their investments, the *otiosi*, who had time and money for this kind of elitist behaviour.³⁷

The existence of a common ground does not of course mean that there were no areas of tension. The prince (with his noble courtiers) and the cities were mostly political opponents. But this did not preclude the conscious integration of a good part of the urban bourgeoisie into the princely clientele.³⁸ In addition the prince had to take into account the power of his urban political opponents. The legitimizing literature that emerged at the courts of the thirteenth century was of course not meant principally for the prince's courtiers, who already supported him, or for sympathizing noblemen, but for his urban and non-aristocratic subjects.

Court patronage in the vernacular had undoubtedly the function of idealizing the prince among all sections of the population.³⁹ Consequently, I would advance the proposition that most medieval literature was not intended for just one segment of the reading public, but was multifunctional.

It is in this framework that the above-mentioned proposal for decoding the Flemish *Reinaert* should be considered: noblemen could chuckle at the many inside jokes in this *roman à clef* about well-known characters, intellectual clerics could enjoy the mocking of the less intelligent courtiers, and the burghers laughed up their sleeves at all those vain creatures surrounding the count. Scattered here and there, I detect nice confirmations of my thesis of multifunctionality. F. P. van Oostrom points out that there is a volume in the library of the abbey of Egmond, called *Of Women and Love*, the stylistic and linguistic analysis of which allow us to place the original edition at the court of Holland around 1400; in this are found *cour d'amour* love texts, a fierce anti-peasant song and Shrove Tuesday literature. In spite of the grossly amorous parts, it must have been reading material for no fewer than three groups: the Egmond monks, considering where it was kept; the court, considering where it was composed; the city-dwellers, given its contents.⁴⁰

It is amusing to observe that one researcher interprets the *Jeu de Robin et Marion* of Adam de la Halle, working c. 1276 for the two largest Arras literary *confréries*, as having been written for an aristocratic public, and that another claims that the intended public must be the Arras bourgeoisie. It is reassuring that R. E. V. Stuij and C. Vellekoop dispose of this dilemma by suggesting simply that it was probably written for a mixed audience consisting not only of noblemen and well-to-do patricians, but also of less wealthy craftsmen seeking entertainment in the light-hearted repertoire of the *Carité des Jogleors*.⁴¹ Finally, it is satisfactory to learn from R. Berger that the Arras urban *confrérie* of *Le Puy* was so brilliant between 1258 and 1272 that the proud Arras burghers not only received Artois aristocrats at their public lyrical evenings, but also welcomed the count of Anjou, the English Prince Edward and Duke Henry III of Brabant.⁴²

If, as I have been trying to explain, there are no clear divisions between noble and urban consumers of culture, and if we accept that the irony of a bourgeois story can be appreciated by courtiers,

and vice versa, then the domination of the courtly themes and the relative lack of real bourgeois themes until the fourteenth century need no longer be taken as a sign that a broad urban audience for literature did not exist between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, and a good part of the initial paradox of our argument has been put in perspective.⁴³

An unprejudiced observer will even be able to establish that the successful phases of court culture in the Low Countries mostly happened when a dynasty with a high profile was able to realize not only its political but also its cultural ambitions at the same time that it managed to take advantage of a burgeoning urban economy, or that the critics realized a strong participation in political decision-making; the reigns of Philip of Alsace, John I, Florens V, Albert of Bavaria and Philip the Good are fine examples to support this thesis. Artists are always good barometers of new intellectual and affective patterns of behaviour. But they are equally sensitive to the economic climate. The troubadours of the twelfth century did not choose by accident among the countless principalities of the time two of the most prosperous territories connected by good roads, Champagne and Flanders. In the same way they were also at home in Arras, one of the richest banking centres of the thirteenth century. An unprecedented concentration of domestic and international merchants and capital in Bruges in the fifteenth century explains in the same way the density in that place of internationally acclaimed artists. Their economic prosperity was the foremost trump card for the culture of the Low Countries.

The second trump card was their accessibility as a result of their location on the Romance–Germanic language boundary with respect to several external cultures such as the French, German and English as well as that of Italy. This accessibility was strongly stimulated by the intense political and economic contacts with these neighbouring countries. If it was possible to make polyphonic music at the highest European level at the court of Holland between 1370 and 1404, it was, among other reasons, because the resident minstrels exchanged repertoires and innovations with no less than 350 visiting musicians from many countries.⁴⁴

The location of the Low Countries at the intersection of various European routes offered not only the advantage of the stimulus and the quick introduction of fashionable novelties, but also risks, such

as the risk of losing one's identity and specificity or that of becoming a purely imitative culture. This did not really happen, however. The translation of the *Reinaert* was no slavish copy but a new creative transposition, concentrating on situational humour based on Flemish conditions.

The cosmopolitan character of the culture in the Low Countries was not hindered by the use of the Dutch language. Music and the plastic arts obviously posed no problems and neither did literature, because it remained closely connected with European contents, themes and style. Nor is it the case that the introduction of Dutch coincided with a mental relapse or with a political 'splendid isolation'. The court of Holland under Albert of Bavaria (1358–1404) was more cosmopolitan than it had ever been before even though the literary production in The Hague was exclusively Dutch.⁴⁵

Cultural production in the Low Countries between 1100 and 1530 was seldom out of step with other European cultures; it coasted nimbly on the waves of successive fashions. In golden moments it was even the trendsetter, as with Van Eyck's pictorial *ars nova* and Dufay's Flemish polyphony. The Netherlands were a privileged place of cosmopolitan exchange.

NOTES

- 1 R. R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident, 500–1200* (Paris: Champion, 1963), vol. III, 2, p. 522.
- 2 F. P. van Oostrom, 'Maecenaat en middelnederlandse letterkunde', in J. D. Janssens, ed., *Hoofsheid en devotie in de middeleeuwse maatschappij. De Nederlanden van de 12de tot de 15de eeuw* (Brussels: UFSAL, Centrum Brabantse Geschiedenis, 1982), p. 28.
- 3 Cf., for example, the article by A. M. J. van Buuren in this volume, and also U. Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt. Studien zu den sozialen Voraussetzungen und kulturellen Organisationsformen städtischer Literatur im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983), pp. 254–63.
- 4 See my article in *Jaarboek Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer voor Retorica De Fonteyne te Gent* 34 (1984), 9–33.
- 5 H. Pley, 'Is de laat-middeleeuwse literatuur in de volkstaal vulgair?', in J. H. A. Fontijn, ed., *Populaire literatuur* (Amsterdam: Thespa, 1974), pp. 42–54.
- 6 J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: Penguin, 1979), pp. 54–8; W. Prevenier and W. Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 139–40, 310–12.
- 7 W. Prevenier, 'La démographie des villes du comté de Flandre aux xive et xve siècles', *Revue du Nord* 65 (1983), 255–75.

- 8 W. Prevenier, 'Officials in Town and Countryside in the Low Countries. Social and Professional Developments from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century', *Acta Historica Neerlandica* 7 (1974), 1-17.
- 9 J. Dhondt, 'Ordres ou puissances. L'exemple des Etats de Flandre', *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 5 (1950), 289-305.
- 10 H. Pirenne, 'L'instruction des marchands au moyen âge', *Annales d'Histoire économique et sociale* 1 (1929), 13-28; H. Van Werveke, *Gent* (Gent, 1947), p. 39; Peters, *Literatur*, pp. 269-79. In the comparable centre Arras the schools of the city contained 400 children in the thirteenth century: R. Berger, 'Les bourgeois dans la littérature romane', *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* (1978), 436.
- 11 Quite recently in Reindert P. Meyer, *Literature of the Low Countries. A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium*, 2nd edn (The Hague and Boston: Nijhoff, 1978), p. 23.
- 12 J. C. Payen, 'L'idéologie chevaleresque dans le *Roman de Renart*', in *Epopée animale, fable et fabliau* (Liège: Cahiers de l'A.R.U. Liège, 1978), pp. 33-41.
- 13 F. P. Van Oostrom, *Reinaert primair* (Utrecht: HES, 1983), p. 14.
- 14 In 1982 in Van Oostrom, 'Maecenaat', pp. 28-9; more recently this author shows a tendency to recognize a similar interest as much in noble as in urban circles: H. Pley and F. P. van Oostrom, *Op belofte van profijt. Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991).
- 15 R. Berger, *Littérature et société arrageoises au xiii^e s.* (Arras: Editions Université de Paris iv, 1981); Peters, *Literatur*, pp. 63-96 (on Arras), 97-137 (comparison with other cities).
- 16 J. Lestocquoy, *Les Dynasties bourgeoises d'Arras du x^e au xiv^e siècles* (Arras: Nouvelle Société Anonyme du Pas-de-Calais, 1945); G. Sivéry, *L'Economie du royaume de France au siècle de Saint Louis* (Lille: Presses Universitaires, 1984), pp. 282-95.
- 17 H. Gaus, *The Function of Fiction. The Function of Written Fiction in the Social Process* (Gent: Rijksuniversiteit, Werken Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 1979).
- 18 M. D. Stanger, 'Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders', *French Studies* 11 (1957), 214-29.
- 19 A. Henry, *L'Oeuvre lyrique d'Henri III, duc de Brabant* (Bruges: Rijksuniversiteit, Werken Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 1948), p. 16; see also the article by F. Willaert in this volume.
- 20 In Flanders the so-called Flemish *Aiol* (cf. n. 26 of the article by E. van den Berg and B. Besamusca in this volume); for Brabant see J. G. Heymans, ed., *Van den derden Eduwaert* (Nijmegen: Alfa, 1983), pp. 4, 27; in Holland the most important early example is Jacob van Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael*, c. 1284: W. P. Gerritsen, 'Wat voor boeken zou Floris V gelezen hebben?', in *Floris V* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979), pp. 77-80.
- 21 M. A. Arnould, 'Le plus ancien acte en langue d'oïl: la charte-loi de

- Chièvres, 1194', in *Hommage au prof. P. Bonenfant* (Brussels: Université Libre, 1965), pp. 85–118.
- 22 M. Gysseling, 'De invoering van het Nederlands in ambtelijke bescheiden in de 13de eeuw', *Verslagen en Mededelingen Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* (1971), 27–34; on the social backgrounds of the language shift see A. Derville, 'L'alphabétisation du peuple à la fin du moyen âge', *Revue du Nord* 66 (1984), 762–3.
 - 23 A. M. Koldewey, *Der gude Sente Servas* (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985), pp. 28–9 (c. 1170 for the first part, 1174–83 for the second); on the Middle Dutch version of *Sente Brandane*, see W. P. Gerritsen, Doris Edel and Mieke de Kreek, *De wereld van Sint Brandaan* (Utrecht: HES, 1986), pp. 51–3; on the twelfth-century Dutch literature see J. D. Janssens, 'De Renaissance van de 12de eeuw en de literatuur in de volkstaal in Brabant', in R. Bauer, J. Verbesselt and W. Grauwen, eds., *Brabant in de twaalfde eeuw: een renaissance?* (Brussels: UFSAL, Centrum Brabantse Geschiedenis, 1987), pp. 78–104.
 - 24 Edited by M. Gysseling, *Corpus van middelnederlandse teksten*, vol. II. *Litteraire Handschriften 1* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980), pp. 380–92.
 - 25 M. Gysseling, 'Datering en localisering van Reinaert I', in *Aspects of the Medieval Animal Epic*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series 1, Studia III (Louvain: Katholieke Universiteit, 1975), pp. 165–86 (composition c. 1185–91 at the Flemish court); L. Lulofs, *Van den vos Reynaerde* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1983), pp. 50–3; early thirteenth century according to P. Wackers in this volume.
 - 26 H. Van Werveke, *Een Vlaamse graaf van formaat, Filips van de Elzas* (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1976), pp. 81–2; J. Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Hatier, 1957), pp. 8–9; Stanger, 'Literary Patronage', p. 222.
 - 27 The French *Renart* was composed between 1174 and 1205: L. Foulet, *Le Roman de Renard* (Paris: Champion, 1914).
 - 28 F. Blockmans, *Het Gentsche Stadspatriciaat tot omstreeks 1302* (Antwerp: De Sikkels, 1938), pp. 351–2; Van Werveke, *Gent*, pp. 40–1.
 - 29 On the Dutch Arthurian romance see B. Besamusca and O. S. H. Lie in this volume; I cannot agree with the thesis that the courts of the medieval rulers were the only sponsors and audience: J. Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1979), pp. 42–72, or the one proposing the lower nobility as the essential audience for the Arthurian literature: E. Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), pp. 67–8, 72.
 - 30 On Flanders, see n. 24 above and Stanger, 'Literary Patronage', pp. 220–1; Countess Margaret sponsored the Dutch work of Dirk van Assenede, *Floris ende Blancefloer*; on Brabant see the article by F. Willaert in this volume.
 - 31 On van Heelu and the Wezemaal family, see P. Avonds, 'Van Keulen naar Straatsburg, Jan van Heelu's Rijmkroniek', *Literatuur* 5 (1988),

- 196–204. On Stoke see M. Carasso-Kok, *Repertorium van verhalende historische bronnen uit de middeleeuwen* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), p. 390; F. W. N. Hugenholtz, 'Melis Stoke en Jacob van Maerlant', in D. de Boer and J. W. Marsilje, eds., *De Nederlanden in de late middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: Aula/Het Spectrum, 1987), p. 20.
- 32 Huizinga, *The Waning*, pp. 248–50; Prevenier and Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands*, pp. 313–32; W. Paravicini, 'The Court of the Dukes of Burgundy. A Model for Europe?', in R. G. Asch and A. M. Birke, eds., *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450–1650* (London: Oxford University Press 1991), pp. 69–102.
- 33 A. Verhulst, 'Initiative comtale et développement économique en Flandre au xii^e siècle', in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* J. F. Niermeyer (Groningen: Wolters, 1967), pp. 227–40.
- 34 Around 1260 the function of the Champagne fairs is taken over by cities like Arras (another centre for French literature) and Bruges (Sivéry, *L'Economie*, pp. 299–313).
- 35 G. Dept, *Les Influences anglaise et française dans le comté de Flandre au début du xiii^e siècle* (Ghent and Paris: Universiteit Gent, Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 1928), pp. 52–68, 97–133.
- 36 Blockmans, *Het Gentsche Stadspatriciaat*, pp. 341–7.
- 37 G. Espinas, *Les Origines du capitalisme*, vol. II (Lille: Raoust, 1936), pp. 95–140.
- 38 J. Bartier, *Légistes et gens de Finances au xve siècle* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres, 1955), pp. 190–207; Prevenier and Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands*, pp. 262–6, 279; W. Blockmans and W. Prevenier, *In de ban van Bourgondië* (Houten: Unieboek, 1988), pp. 88–9 (an English edition is forthcoming: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).
- 39 Janssens, 'De Renaissance', pp. 96–103; Stanger, 'Literary Patronage', p. 214; Heymans, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 10–11. Around 1285 Jacob van Maerlant was asked to compose a Dutch world chronicle (*Spiegel historiael*) by Florens V: P. Avonds and J. D. Janssens, *Politiek en literatuur. Brabant en de Slag bij Woeringen (1288)* (Brussels: UFSAL, Centrum Brabantse Geschiedenis, 1989), p. 105, and also the article by Van den Berg and Besamusca in this volume.
- 40 F. P. van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer. Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1987), p. 276. The book is also available in an English translation: *Court and Culture: Dutch Literature, 1350–1450*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 41 M. Gerhardt, *Essai d'analyse littéraire de la pastorale* (Assen: Van Gorcum, Hak en Prakke, 1950), p. 43; M. Ungureanu, *Société et littérature bourgeoises d'Arras aux xii^e et xiii^e siècles*. Mémoires de la Commission des Monuments Historiques du Pas-de-Calais, viii, 1 (Arras: Imprimerie

Centrale de l'Artois, 1955), p. 207; R. E. V. Stuip and C. Vellekoop, 'Het *Jeu de Robin et Marion*', in E. H. P. Cordfunke, F. W. N. Hugenholtz and Kl. Sierksma, eds., *Handel en Wandel in de Dertiende Eeuw* (Muiderberg: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1986), p. 123.

42 Berger, 'Les bourgeois', p. 434.

43 C. A. J. Armstrong, 'The Golden Age in Burgundy', in A. G. Dickens, ed., *The Courts of Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 60; in his article in this volume Herman Pleij proves how easy it was to adapt chivalric novels to the demands of the urban audiences.

44 A. Janse, 'Het muziekleven aan het hof van Albrecht van Beieren, 1358–1404 in Den Haag', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis* 36 (1986), 145–50.

45 Van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer*, pp. 17–22, 300–6.

CHAPTER 2

Middle Dutch literature at court (with special reference to the court of Holland-Bavaria)

Frits van Oostrom

The general attitude of students of medieval Dutch literature towards the relationship between Middle Dutch literature and the courts has often been ambivalent at best, and not infrequently downright negative. The fact that Middle Dutch literature at court is regularly seen as a contradiction in terms is related to a deep-rooted view of the medieval Low Countries as a culture which is characterized precisely by its urbanization, and therefore may be called 'bourgeois' to a high degree. Another stumbling block, moreover, is the common notion that those members of the Low Countries aristocracy who aspired to high status must have used French as their language of culture. The court of the counts of Flanders is regarded as a prime example in this connection – and it is indeed striking that for this milieu, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for instance, a wealth of French literary connections can be collected, whereas the counts' ties with Flemish literature are few and far between.¹ This appears to be a clear-cut case of two separate worlds: a strongly Frenchified nobility with hardly any interest in Middle Dutch literature, on the one hand, and a bourgeoisie with a great thirst for knowledge who were dependent on those very Middle Dutch texts for their cultural self-realization, on the other. This view is somewhat similar to the way in which the English situation (particularly that before 1350) has been regarded; in England, too, there is said to have been a highly sophisticated court which was completely permeated with French literary culture, and a literature in Middle English which is supposed to have been aimed at a mainly bourgeois audience.

This is the spirit in which many scholars have written about Middle Dutch literature, and in which many more have looked at it. And there is no denying that Middle Dutch literature provides some grist for this mill. It can, for instance, be observed that a number of

the texts that are seen as the highlights of medieval (French) court culture have not come down to us in Middle Dutch translations or adaptations. Middle Dutch literature shows no or hardly any traces of any reception of the *Tristan*, has no version of Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette*, and comparatively few traditional courtly lyrics. In addition, the Middle Dutch chivalric texts that have survived in manuscripts often make a cheap rather than an aristocratic impression – miniatures, for instance, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

In contrast to this, however, courtly literature appears at times to have been very eagerly taken up in Middle Dutch: two translations of the *Roman de la Rose* have survived, and as many as three of the vast *Lancelot en prose*. Moreover, there is nothing in the way these and comparable Middle Dutch texts were adapted to suggest that they were made more bourgeois than their aristocratic French sources; in spite of all the differences there may be, they are largely in the same feudal-chivalric spirit as their Old French originals.²

In this respect, therefore, the situation appears to be somewhat more complicated and less clear-cut than was initially suggested. The same is true for the crucial and fascinating linguistic circumstances of the time: here too a simple polarization (French equals nobility; Middle Dutch equals other estates) will not do. In actual fact, there seems to have been extensive multilingualism; French indeed often appears to have been superior as a language of culture at the courts, but Middle Dutch literature nevertheless appears to have nestled in its shade. This, for instance, seems to have been the case among the Flemish nobility.³ At times, Middle Dutch and French to a very large extent coexisted at court, with successive shifts in priority; this seems to hold true for the court of Brabant, which appears to have been extensively Frenchified under Duke Henry I and his successors Henry II and Henry III (that is, until the late thirteenth century), but was becoming strongly involved in Middle Dutch literature during the reigns of their immediate successors, John I, John II and John III.⁴

The courts of the medieval Low Countries and Middle Dutch literature thus certainly do appear to have been connected in some way. Following this recent view, quite a number of studies have appeared in the past few years which link Middle Dutch literature and the courts – so many indeed that Prevenier's contribution to this volume can be seen as a reaction to these reactions. In any case, all

this clearly shows that schematic oversimplifications will no longer suffice here, and that *a priori* assumptions will hardly be of any use either. There is no alternative but to evaluate the possible relations between Middle Dutch texts and the culture of the nobility in the Netherlands as accurately as possible in each individual case. This frequently involves studying a fairly complex situation, in which Middle Dutch literature is to be examined in a context which may be called international from both a literary and a political perspective. This is particularly true for the example which will be central in this article: that of the literature at the medieval court of the counts of Holland, more especially during the Bavarian period (the second half of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century).⁵

Indications of an interest in Middle Dutch literature in courtly circles in Holland date back to the thirteenth century. A key role in this was played by Jacob van Maerlant, the great Middle Dutch poet who – as far as we know – wrote the majority of his works by order of the circle of nobles from Holland and Zeeland surrounding the young Count Florens V (for further details, see Gerritsen's contribution). From the many polemical passages in which Maerlant contrasts his chivalric–didactic work with the chivalric epics, which in his view are far too popular (since they are historically unsound and ethically dubious), it can by implication be deduced that at least one generation earlier (that is, from the early thirteenth century), but perhaps somewhat earlier as well, reading or listening to romances of chivalry from the matter of Arthur and of Charlemagne were favourite pastimes of the aristocracy in Holland. However much Maerlant fulminates against these texts, the vehemence with which, even in his last work, the *Spiegel historiael* (*Mirror of History*, dedicated to Count Florens V, c. 1285), he still thinks it is necessary to berate 'die borderes die vraye ystorien vermorden met sconen rime, met scoenre tale' (the jesters who murder true historical accounts with beautiful verses, with beautiful language) suggests that even Maerlant never succeeded in completely supplanting this traditional aristocratic chivalric literature in the favours of the audience at the court of Holland. It is worth mentioning that in both cases – that is, in the case both of Maerlant and of chivalric epics – Middle Dutch is the language of literature (even though French certainly cannot be completely discarded as

far as chivalric literature is concerned): of all the central courts in the thirteenth-century Low Countries, it was the court of Holland in particular that appears to have cultivated the Dutch vernacular, which is also suggested by the fact that it was especially this court which made extensive use of Middle Dutch for administrative purposes.

When at the start of the fourteenth century dominion over Holland passed into the hands of the so-called House of Hainault, the cultural and political constellation appears to have changed quite considerably. In the first place, Holland from then on was ruled from a distance: the Hainault rulers resided in Valenciennes as often as possible, and visited their residence in the northern Netherlands only sporadically. If this acted as a definite brake on the development of a genuine court culture in these parts – for wherever the ruler is, his court is too – an even greater drawback was the fact that the counts of Hainault had no or hardly any rapport with Middle Dutch. Although it is conceivable that they could speak, or at least understand, some Middle Dutch, French was their mother tongue and therefore of course their language of culture too. Literature for the Hainault rulers meant French literature; and indications of any active interest in Middle Dutch literature on their part are limited to the occasional remuneration offered to ‘Willem van Delft die dichter’ (William of Delft, the poet) in 1337.⁶

In view of all this, it need not surprise us that there in fact appears to have been no court literature in the period of Hainault dominance over Holland. In these decades (roughly, the first half of the fourteenth century), anyone with literary aspirations in Middle Dutch found no audience worthy of the name at the court of Holland and had to turn elsewhere. But times changed when the House of Bavaria came to power in Holland around the middle of the fourteenth century. The political circumstances which caused this will not be discussed here for the sake of brevity – but they resulted in a landslide, culturally as well as politically. All this was to lead to the awakening of Middle Dutch from its dormancy as the language of literature at court.

It was of great consequence in this respect that the House of Bavaria, in contrast to the preceding House of Hainault, decided to reside in Holland itself; the Binnenhof (‘Inner Court’) in The Hague once again became the ruler’s residence. This meant that the court regained its soul, and it could begin to function as a true

administrative and cultural centre. What is more, the international connections of the courtly milieu in Holland remained intact. In some respects they would even be extended further; the new rulers – especially Albert of Bavaria, who stayed in power for almost half a century (1358–1404) and who was succeeded by his son, William VI (1404–17) – were clearly considered important in the European aristocratic world of their time. A striking example of this is the very fact that Count Albert succeeded in allying his House with mighty Burgundy by means of a double marriage (contracted on 12 April 1385); knowing the Burgundians, we can be sure that they too must have expected a definite advantage from this double alliance with Holland–Hainault–Bavaria. (In the end, the Burgundian expectations would not be disappointed, for when Countess Jacqueline of Bavaria, William VI's only legitimate child, who was childless herself, was left holding the reins, the county they coveted fell into Philip of Burgundy's lap.) In other areas, too, the Holland–Bavarian rulers appear to have been able to play their part on the international stage. The journeys to Prussia⁷ were actively supported by them (especially by William VI). Count William VI was one of the few continental members of the Order of the Garter, while the Orders founded by him and his father – the Order of the Garden and the Order of St Anthony, in particular – had several distinguished foreign members. One final example that may be given here, out of a whole possible range, is the prominent part played by the House of Bavaria at the extremely elaborate and baroque festival known to scholars as the Parisian Court of Love of 1401: William of Oostervant (the future William VI) was one of the eleven *conservateurs*, and he reputedly was so enthusiastic about this enterprise that he would have liked to have paid the membership fee of 100 golden crowns to the king of France straightaway.

In the light of these examples – to which many more could have been added, as I have said – it is not surprising that French continued to play a part as the language of culture at the court of Holland under the Bavarian House. On the occasion of the Burgundian double marriage, Jan van Mechelen (Jean de Malines) wrote an epithalamium in French for which he was remunerated by the court of Holland (was a similar remuneration offered by the Burgundians?), and which may have resulted in his visit to the court in The Hague a year later.⁸ Of course, it is conceivable that Jean de Malines, who was born in the south of Brabant, recited works in

Middle Dutch on his later visits to the Binnenhof – the epithalamium is his only surviving poem – but there is no need to doubt that his works would also have been understood if he had recited them in French. After all, as early as 1372, Cudelier, the *spreker* (speaker) of the French King Charles V, had appeared before the court in The Hague; in 1394 and 1398 this minor tradition was continued in visits by *sprekers* from the court of Charles VI. It has also been attested that members of the Holland-Bavarian court community purchased books in French, especially for Count William VI's (Burgundian!) wife, who, in 1408, paid 15 crowns to 'enen man uut Vrancric die boitscap brochte ende nye gedichte boeken ende anders' (a man from France who brought a message and new books of poems and other things). These may have included a copy of Christine de Pisan's *Cité des dames*; at any rate, this work very emphatically praises Margaret as 'the noble Duchess of Holland and Countess of Hainault' – further proof of the connections of the Holland-Bavarian court milieu with the *beau monde* of its time.

Nevertheless, the evidence for the court's connection with franco-phone culture to some extent pales into insignificance beside its attested cultural contacts eastwards. The explanation for this flow of culture, the scope of which certainly was 'new' to the court of Holland, can easily be found in the antecedents of the Holland-Bavarian rulers. None the less, it is striking to observe how the Binnenhof is beginning to swarm with *sprekers* and artists from German-speaking areas as soon as the Bavarian rulers are in charge – witness the extant accounts of the counts' administration. In his recent research, Theo Meder has traced these artists to regions as diverse as Würtemberg, Nuremberg, Meissen, Cleves, Trier, Heidelberg, Brunswick, Strasburg, Cologne, Holstein – and as far afield as Poland, Austria and Bohemia.

The work these German speakers and poets recited at the court of Holland undoubtedly belonged to the genres of *Sprüche*, *Mären* and *Reden* with which students of German literature are thoroughly familiar, the *epische Kleinformen* which are so characteristic of fourteenth-century literary life. An influx of lyrical *Minnesang* is also very much to be expected; it is certainly very telling in this connection that the Haags Liederhandschrift (The Hague Song Manuscript), which is indirectly linked to this milieu, even contains a poem by Walther von der Vogelweide. In the wake of this cultural influx it

may even be assumed that the members of the court of Holland had some acquaintance with certain great epic Middle High German literary texts. For the ease with which Dirc Potter, an official and man of letters at the court of Holland, around 1412, refers to heroes from the matter of *Parzival* and *Titarel* is striking, and he does so in a way which suggests that he could be sure that these were familiar to those who read and listened to his own work.

A clear expansion eastwards of the cultural horizons at the court of Holland can therefore be said to have taken place during the Bavarian period – a conclusion which in retrospect is so obvious that one is almost ashamed to point this out so emphatically. In connection with this, it has frequently been observed that in this period in particular (the late fourteenth century) literary Middle Dutch often has a strong German colouring. This is a very complicated matter, to which it is impossible to do justice within the scope of this contribution – research into the subject, incidentally, has not as yet progressed far enough for scholars to be able to do this. This phenomenon is certainly not confined to texts from the sphere of the Holland–Bavarian court; for example, the lyrics from the famous Gruuthuse Manuscript, originating from the Bruges area are imbued with it too (but perhaps in a different way?). Still, it is attractive to attribute at least part of this German colouring of the late fourteenth-century literary language at the court of Holland to the influence of the House of Bavaria, and the close ties with the (literary) culture upstream along the river Rhine that are associated with this influence. Is this literary amalgam of languages the upshot, or at least the reflection, of a communicative ‘compromise’ that was worked out between east and west within the Germanic language community to help them understand each other? Or, alternatively, should we take the German colouring not to be based on actual speech, and explain it as a literary fashion, which was shaped under the influence of the cultural prestige of Middle High German literature, of *Minnesang* and *Minnereden* in particular? Additional research into the written language of administration used in the Holland–Bavarian milieu may shed more light on this. It is here that the possibility of the mixed language as an actual means of communication can be most easily visualized – certainly since it has been determined that at the arrival of Albert of Bavaria a train of German officials came along to the Binnenhof to mould the administrative infrastructure in the *gründliche* fashion to which the emperor’s court was accustomed.⁹

Even though the problematic linguistic condition of late fourteenth-century Middle Dutch is still to be explored, therefore, it certainly seems safe to assume that there is some causal connection between the change of power at the court of Holland and the revival of Middle Dutch literature there. It is conceivable that under the Hainault rulers the language barrier between Middle Dutch and French had at least impeded a fruitful interaction – and the rather great distance (literally as well as figuratively) from which the Hainault rulers governed Holland concluded the matter. When the House of Bavaria came to power, Holland was ruled by a family whose mother tongue was much closer to the county's vernacular, and who, for that reason, could be expected to take a genuine interest in the literary work of Hollanders. Consequently, the court could again become a focal point of Middle Dutch literature; and the very eagerness with which, for instance, Willem van Hildegasberch, the most important itinerant author of short, moralizing poems at the time, was welcomed at the table of Count Albert and his son – as is, once again, documented in the accounts – proves that the new rulers at the Binnenhof appreciated Middle Dutch poetry.

As Joachim Bumke has shown, *Residenzbildung*, the creation of a residence, and the formation of a chancery were two of the most important infrastructural conditions if medieval courts were to develop into literary centres.¹⁰ During the reign of the Bavarian House both these conditions were met at the court in The Hague: the Binnenhof was the main residence of the Bavarian rulers, and they had an extensive administrative staff at their disposal there. In this particular case, the linguistic affinity between the rulers, who originally hailed from foreign parts, and their subjects in Holland was one further favourable infrastructural factor. All in all, a court culture of European standing began to flourish under the patronage of these ambitious princes, a culture in which literature clearly had its place.

One of the literary activities at the Holland-Bavarian court was the composition of love lyrics, associated with court musicians such as Martinus Fabri and Hugo Boy (although such lyrics were anonymous in the overwhelming majority of cases). Brief, moralizing poems constituted a more serious variant within the genre of short lyrics, in which field Willem van Hildegasberch was the uncrowned king. The King of Arms Bavaria Herald wrote a historiographical diptych which grounded the regional history of Holland in universal history. Court chaplain Dirc van Delft, in his majestic

scholastic prose, wrote a comprehensive manual on Christian faith and the Christian way of life. Furthermore, there is the varied *œuvre* of Dirc Potter, a high-ranking court official: a (half-ironic?) didactic poem about love, interspersed with exemplary novellas, an exposition of vices and virtues tailored to the needs of laymen and a treatise on the necessity to curb individual and collective feelings of revenge. Only the most striking, newly written works have been mentioned, and only in so far as they have survived as recognizable witnesses to the literary life at this court. It has now been firmly established that the real palette of literature at the Holland-Bavarian court must have been even more varied: the accounts, for instance, refer to several texts which were written down for the rulers and their retinues, but which must have been lost since. What is more, it is fully conceivable that there are some works among the surviving Middle Dutch texts which were initially composed for the court of Holland-Bavaria, but which have by now been stripped of the characteristics of the milieu in which they originally functioned.¹¹

However, even without these unknown quantities the tableau of literary works at the Holland-Bavarian court is interesting enough, in respect of both their quantity and their quality. The international context of court life in those days clearly reverberates in these works. Some of the texts were translated from French, German (cognate to Middle Dutch) and possibly Italian – the latter is a novelty in Middle Dutch literature, which can be credited to Dirc Potter, who, around 1410, had set off on a lengthy visit to Rome as the count's diplomat.¹² English too left its traces; this can be most clearly observed in the library of Jacqueline of Bavaria, the only child of and successor to William VI (and consort of Humphrey of Gloucester, among others), who on her death left some English books, of which it is said: 'so en hadde hier ten lande dair nyemant geen gadinge in; des worden vercoft enen vreemden Engelsschen coipman' (since no one here had any liking for them, they were sold to a foreign English merchant).¹³ And then, of course, there was Latin, which even in the late fourteenth century was still the dominant language in the spheres of the Church and of learning, and which, through standard works such as those by Hugo Ripelin and Martinus Polonus, for example, exerted a seminal influence on scholasticism and historiography at the Holland-Bavarian court. But however deep the literature of the Holland-Bavarian court may

have been rooted in international soil, we would not be giving the texts their due if we did not also stress their individual Middle Dutch character. First of all, this materialized when, as was often the case, they tapped the 'native' tradition for their sources – and in this respect the great influence still exerted by Jacob van Maerlant is particularly striking. Apart from obtaining its native characteristics in this way, however, Holland-Bavarian court literature is more than simply 'the Middle Dutch variant of ...' especially because of its authors' comparative independence from their sources. They compiled, selected and altered in every way they saw fit, thereby creating works which were 'naer 's lants gelegenheyt verduyst' (Dutchified after the fashion of the country), to borrow a phrase of the great seventeenth-century Dutch poet Vondel. Van Buuren's contribution to this volume provides a good example: although there are clear parallels between Dirc Potter and such great contemporaries, or near-contemporaries, as Chaucer, Gower and Boccaccio, he nevertheless has an authorial personality all his own. The same holds true for his fellow court authors, Willem van Hildegasberch, Dirc van Delft and the Bavaria Herald *vis-à-vis* related writers such as Der Teichner, Ulrich von Pottenstein and Froissart. The Middle Dutch literature of the Holland-Bavarian court is neither an international clearing-house, nor a remote island. Perhaps this literature is best described by the metaphor of a peninsula: it was connected to the great continent of the European court literature of its time, but it formed a promontory of its own in relation to this.

If this contribution had been written in the nineteenth century, it would certainly have attempted to find the traits of an endogenous Dutch national character behind the individual character of Holland-Bavarian court literature. Having become 'sadder and wiser' since the 1930s, we think twice before using such terms: such concepts have become quite suspect. Yet, seen through a European wide-angle lens, what is striking is the dearth of lightheartedness and the pervasive moralism in this literature. There is hardly any trace of frivolity; even the courtly love poems in Holland are characterized by a *Traktatstil* – to use Ingeborg Glier's term;¹⁴ and Hildegasberch in comparison with the Condés is an even more serious case in point. Even the most lighthearted writer of them all, court official Dirc Potter, still feels obliged to apologize for the frivolity of *Der minnen loep* (*The Course of Love*) by means of later,

serious works. If it had not been the fourteenth century we were characterizing here, the deep-rooted Dutch Calvinist spirit would easily have been held responsible for this. As it is, one is almost tempted to put forward the inverse hypothesis: that Calvinism was to take root so easily here in later centuries because it befitted a country which of old had been prone to moralize. Holland-Bavarian moralism, incidentally, does not appear to have had any real connections with the *Devotio Moderna*, the movement which has sometimes been seen – often too easily – as a precursor of the Reformation. (Although the Modern Devotion was spreading in these parts in the same period, it nevertheless appears to have appealed rather to laymen of a different – more urban? – milieu.)

However, we should not lose ourselves in rash generalizations. For if one thing becomes clear on reviewing the literature of the Holland-Bavarian court, it must be how exceptionally diverse the literary panorama is, in terms of genre, form and content. The counts' patronage in the background should be seen as something which created the conditions for literary life, rather than as something which left a direct mark on the contents of the texts. Although all the authors involved appear to have realized who it was they were writing for, and in places certainly will have kept their (intended) princely readers particularly in mind, all of them had and took plenty of licence to write their work in their own spirit. In a sense, each author is championing his own cause: while the Bavaria Herald in his works calls for war against the Frisians, court chaplain Dirc van Delft urges his readers to have close relations with their confessor, the itinerant poet Hildegarsberch calls on his audience to give art its due and the careerist court official Dirc Potter argues that one should be rewarded on the basis of one's own merits, and not on the grounds of descent.

This appears to be typical of the open literary climate characterized by so much late fourteenth-century court literature. In contrast to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when romances of chivalry and court lyrics set the pace, there later appears to have been a proliferation of genres and authors at court, which makes it virtually impossible to detect a dominant spirit. This does not make life any easier for present-day scholars, and some may tend to interpret this literary abundance as a sign of decadence and disintegration. But there appear to be equally good reasons for considering this phenomenon as the chief characteristic of the dynamism and

vitality of court culture at the time, which was sufficiently open to provide opportunities for self-realization to authors of very different kinds. And finally it is conceivable that we have fallen victim to an optical illusion: the fact that so much more material from the fourteenth century has survived in writing than has come down to us from earlier periods is certainly partly responsible for our impression of the pluriformity of the court culture of the time.

At any rate, this pluriformity is a reality, throughout Europe and also as far as literature at the Holland-Bavarian court is concerned. This can even be observed within the *oeuvre* of a single author, as is illustrated by not only Dirc Potter's work but also by the court lyrics, which at first sight seem so very traditional.¹⁵ Works by the court musicians (and lyricists?) Martinus Fabri and Hugo Boy have survived which range from elevated courtly poems to street cries set to music. With respect to language, too, Fabri and Boy and their companions commanded several registers: their songs are both in French and in Middle Dutch. The musical techniques used are equally varied, ranging from *ars subtilior* to downright popular music. And we should keep in mind that the much-mutilated work of these two Holland-Bavarian composers that has survived is probably only the tip of the iceberg. All this indicates the extent to which (literary) culture in Holland around this time was part of a European network of cultural relations, within which Holland took more than it gave, to be sure, but it certainly did not just take: the melody of one of the songs mentioned just now appears to have influenced Oswald von Wolkenstein!

The most impressive example of the position of the Holland-Bavarian court in the interplay of cultural give-and-take can be found in the art of illumination.¹⁶ During the reigns of the Holland-Bavarian counts this art was flourishing spectacularly in the northern Netherlands, and there is every reason to think that the patronage of the court of Holland was partly responsible for this. The style of the miniatures is related to the tradition of the European court style, which was shaped at the courts of the French kings from Saint Louis to Charles VI, and which at the time appeared in a very similar fashion in the miniatures produced for the court of Bohemia. In this respect, the miniaturists (from Utrecht, Haarlem or Delft?) working for Albert of Bavaria and his family were evidently trained within an international school; but the best artists among them, in their turn, were to make an active contribution to the formation of

an international school. The most famous example in this connection links the art of illumination with the more monumental art of painting: Jan van Eyck is known to have worked at the court in The Hague in his early years, as a painter in the service of John of Bavaria. Through him the patronage of the Holland-Bavarian court contributed directly to the cream of medieval court culture.

Of course, it is no coincidence that such an example is available in the case of painting, but not in the case of literature. Images are a universal language, whereas Middle Dutch was not. If only because of this, Middle Dutch literature, including therefore that of the Holland-Bavarian court, *a priori* had a limited impact across the language barriers – even though this should not lead to hasty conclusions about Middle Dutch literature being *per se* behind other literatures or about its influence being completely absent elsewhere.¹⁷ Usually, however, such an impact will have depended on special circumstances. In any case, this appears to hold true for Holland-Bavarian court literature.

At a very early stage, for instance, the *Tafel vanden kersten ghelove* (*Table of the Christian Faith*), the encyclopedia of Christian doctrine which court chaplain Dirc van Delft had dedicated to Albert of Bavaria (when the count was on his deathbed), was rendered into German.¹⁸ The explanation for the quite remarkable fact that a German version was made of Dirc van Delft's work probably lies in the author's personal connections: for besides being court chaplain at the court in The Hague, Dirc was a *regent* (professor) at the university of Erfurt. He must have travelled to and fro between Holland and Thuringia, especially during the years when he was working on the *Tafel*; and this must have been the reason for the early reception of his work in eastern parts. However, Dirc's work was also welcomed in the south: around 1480, the library catalogue of the Burgundian court mentions a manuscript 'intitulé La table de la foy chrétienne, en thyois'. In this case, one may well ask, without being unduly cynical, whether Dirc's text mattered all that much: for there is every reason to doubt whether members of the Burgundian court ever bothered to read Middle Dutch literature – even if one assumes that they had a sufficient command of the language to do so. It is more likely that the miniatures which accompanied the text were the reason for the *Tafel* ending up in Burgundy; for a large number of the early, aristocratic manuscripts containing the work were illuminated in the court style discussed earlier, the qualities of

which will not have escaped the attention of the Burgundian connoisseurs.

The 'success' of the authors at the Holland-Bavarian court, therefore, is first and foremost a regional affair, within the confines of Middle Dutch. And in this respect, too, its impact should not be exaggerated: quite a few of these texts appear to have functioned only within the elite communities for which they had been primarily intended. However, at times the borders with other circles were crossed. Although Willem van Hildegasberch is known to have aimed principally at the court in The Hague, for instance, it is also known that as an itinerant *sprookspreker* (reciter of short poems) he was welcomed by urban authorities and private individuals, and occasionally even by the clergy.¹⁹ This is a valuable reminder that we should not regard court literature, and the literature of the Holland-Bavarian court in particular, as being too confined and too exclusive. This is even clearer in the case of Dirc van Delft. Originally his work was eagerly received in the noble circles for which it was primarily written, and it was illuminated accordingly, but after a while it had a much wider reception, especially in convents. Apparently, while in monasteries the Latin sources were studied, this vernacular exposition of the scholastic world view was very much in place here too. And finally, around 1480, the *Tafel* was even printed, albeit in a form which was very different from that in which the text had originally appeared. It was strongly abridged, and all sorts of asides which had been so functional for the earlier court audience were removed. The dedication in the prologue was left out as well, which meant that the names of both the author and the patron vanished too. That is why at first sight the text looks like the umpteenth example of the anonymous devotional works that were churned out when printing had just been invented. Only when it is examined with a certain amount of background knowledge does it become clear that this is a bridge, albeit a rickety one, between two different medieval worlds which are often considered to be completely separate: those of the printing press and the court. In this special case, the active patronage of the Holland-Bavarian counts was not just the pivot of a literature for the courtly inner circle, but also contributed to the literary culture of a reading public a long way from this centre.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. M. D. Stanger, 'Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders', *French Studies* 11 (1957), 214-29; but see also the publications mentioned in n. 3.
- 2 Cf. W. P. Gerritsen: 'Vertalingen van Oudfranse literaire teksten in het Middelnederlands', in R. E. V. Stuip, ed., *Franse literatuur van de Middeleeuwen* (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988), pp. 184-207; F. P. van Oostrom, *Reinaert primair. Over het oorspronkelijke publiek en de geïntendeerde functie van Van den vos Reynaerde* (Utrecht: HES, 1983). This is not to say that the differences cannot be considerable; see, for instance, R. Zemel, *Op zoek naar Galiene. Over de Oudfranse Fergus en de Middelnederlandse Ferguut* (Amsterdam: Schiphouwer and Brinkman, 1991), and A. Th. Bouwman, *Reinaert en Renart. Het dierenepos Van den vos Reynaerde vergeleken met de Oudfranse Roman de Renart* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991).
- 3 Cf. A. Th. Bouwman, 'Na den Walschen boucken. Neerlandistiek en romanistiek', in F. P. van Oostrom et al., eds., *Misselike tonghe. De Middelnederlandse letterkunde in interdisciplinair verband* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 45-56, and J. D. Janssens, 'De "Vlaamse" achtergronden van de *Lancelotcompilatie*', in B. Besamusca and F. Brandsma, eds., *De ongevalliche Lanceloet* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992), pp. 21-43.
- 4 Cf. *inter alia* F. P. van Oostrom, 'Maecenaat en Middelnederlandse letterkunde', in J. D. Janssens, ed., *Hoofsheid en devotie in de middeleeuwse maatschappij* (Brussels: s.n., 1982), pp. 22-40. It appears likely that, among the factors which promoted the shift to Middle Dutch, the cultural exchange between court and bourgeoisie was significant.
- 5 Unless indicated otherwise, the details of what follows are taken from F. P. van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer. Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1987); the book is also available in an English translation: *Court and Culture: Dutch Literature, 1350-1450*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 6 At the University of Leiden, Janet van der Meulen is preparing a study of the Hainault literary milieu.
- 7 See Wim van Anrooij's contribution to this book.
- 8 Cf. T. Meder, *Sprookspreker in Holland. Leven en werken van Willem van Hildegarsberch (ca. 1400)* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 450-3. The details of what follows which do not occur in *Het woord van eer* have also been taken from this book.
- 9 See, besides *Het woord van eer*, especially D. E. H. de Boer, 'Een vorst trekt noordwaarts', in D. E. H. de Boer and J. W. Marsilje, eds., *De Nederlanden in de late middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1987), pp. 283-309.
- 10 Cf. J. Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1979), pp. 58-65.
- 11 For all this, see *Het woord van eer*, and for an example of a text which was originally intended for the court of Holland but which has since lost the

- characteristics of this milieu, see Geert Warnar, 'Het *Nuttelijc boec* en het Hollandse hof', *Spektator* 18 (1989), 290–304.
- 12 See A. M. J. van Buuren's contribution to this volume.
 - 13 Cf. *Het woord van eer*, p. 35. Jacqueline's will was published in *Codex diplomaticus neerlandicus*, 2nd series, vol. 1 (Utrecht, 1852), pp. 176, 182, 186. Manly and Rickert argue that one of them was a Chaucer manuscript: Cambridge University Library Gg.4.27; see John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*, vol. 1: *Descriptions of the Manuscripts* (University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 181–2.
 - 14 Cf. I. Glier, *Artes amandi* (Munich: Artemis, 1971), p. 278.
 - 15 For what follows, see especially J. van Biezen and J. P. Gumbert, eds., *Two Chansonniers from the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1985).
 - 16 For this, see especially James Marrow's forthcoming work and its promising forerunners in *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), and F. P. van Oostrom, 'An Outsider's View', in Koert van der Horst and Johann-Christian Klamt, eds., *Masters and Miniatures. Proceedings of the Congress on Medieval Manuscript Illumination in the Northern Netherlands (Utrecht, 10–13 December 1989)*. Studies and Facsimiles of Netherlandish Illuminated Manuscripts, 3 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1992), pp. 39–49.
 - 17 It is striking, for instance, that in Middle Dutch the tradition of medieval New Year poetry began 'erstaunlich früh', according to A. Holtorf (*Neujahrswünsche im Liebesliede des ausgehenden Mittelalters* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1973), p. 16). The so-called *abele spelen* are a *cause célèbre*, too, and this holds good even more for the old hypothesis – which merits renewed research – that Germany came into contact with French courtly culture through the mediation of the Low Countries (cf. Bumke, *Mäzene*, p. 351, n. 275).
 - 18 The history of the reception of the *Tafel* is discussed in F. P. van Oostrom, 'Dirck van Delft en zijn lezers', in W. van den Berg and J. Stouten, eds., *Het woord aan de lezer* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1987), pp. 49–71.
 - 19 See especially Meder, *Sprookspreker in Holland*, and Meder's contribution to H. Pleij et al., eds., *Op belofte van profijt. Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 151–65.

CHAPTER 3

Heralds, knights and travelling

Wim van Anrooij

Want wi dat wille zijn ghepresen,
Ten wapinen si moeten reesen,
Daert te doene es, metten vromen.¹

(For those who wish to be praised must travel with the brave to the scene of battle, where it all happens. *Van eenen rudder die zinen zone leerde* (*Of a Knight Who Taught his Son*), fourteenth century)

The successful career of the Swabian nobleman Georg von Ehingen (d. 1508) began in 1446 or shortly afterwards in a modest fashion at the court of the young Duke Sigmund of Austria, in Innsbruck.² As a youngster he was initially employed as a servant of the duke's wife, Eleonora, but he quickly worked his way up to be her servant at table and carver. When eventually he became aware of his burgeoning physical strength, he preferred a more dynamic court, where he would be able to become an active knight. Around 1452–3 he consequently joined the court of Duke Albert VI of Austria, who knighted him in 1453, in Prague, on the occasion of the coronation of Ladislas V Posthumus (king of Hungary) as king of Bohemia. Meanwhile Georg von Ehingen had managed to become Duke Albert's chamberlain. Shortly after his father had divided his possessions among his four sons in 1459, Georg, in keeping with family tradition, started working as an official in the service of the House of Württemberg, where he became a politician and a diplomat *pur sang*, a man of distinction.

When Georg von Ehingen later records the story of his life, he first gives a short introduction about his ancestry and then confines himself to giving an account of the events that took place between 1454 and 1458–9, the years in which as a knight he made two journeys, both within and outside Europe. He called this work *Reisen nach der Ritterschaft*. As far as its contents are concerned, the account

of the first journey (1454–6) – from Swabia, via Venice and Rhodes to the Holy Land, then to the monastery of St Catherine near Mount Sinai, and finally via Cyprus, Rhodes and Venice back to Swabia – resembles accounts by pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land, the popularity of which had been constantly growing from the first half of the fourteenth century. The second journey can be characterized as a grand tour of several European princely courts (France, Spain, Portugal, Spain again and England). When the occasion was right, during both the first and the second journey, Georg von Ehingen gave full rein to his chivalric aspirations. His most conspicuous achievement was in the service of King Alfonso V of Portugal, when he fought as his army commander in northern Africa against the heathen. After a massive battle had been indecisive he managed to defeat his direct opponent in a separately organized single combat. The author, however, does not fail to point out that, when fighting the heathen in Granada on the side of the Spanish King Henry IV of Castile, he sustained a substantial injury in the shin, which left a scar that was to remain visible into his old age.

During Georg von Ehingen's absence, Albert VI of Austria reserved his position at court for him. After the first journey had been completed, the Austrian duke, moreover, was so enthusiastic that he promoted the returning knight to the rank of *oberster kamerer*³ (archchamberlain) and admitted him to the Order of the Salamander. Since he felt that his own honour was involved in Georg von Ehingen's journeys as well, Duke Albert sent 'ain herfarnen herolt, der vil sprachen reden kundt'⁴ (an experienced herald, who was able to speak many languages) to accompany him on the second journey. The connection between the knight's exploits and the promotions at court that resulted from these is characteristic of numerous chivalric biographies, a genre which could be said to be flourishing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially in France and England.⁵ An early example of this connection can, incidentally, be found in the biography of Guillaume le Maréchal (1145–1219), who began his career in an unobtrusive fashion, but who finally became the guardian and master of the English King Henry III.⁶

According to Maurice Keen, travelling was part and parcel of every knight's characteristic pattern of behaviour from the twelfth century onwards.⁷ In the earliest period it was particularly tourna-

ments on the border between the German Empire and northern France which earned the knights a resounding reputation. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fights against the heathen, for which the knights had to travel far from home, were more important. In his *Livre de chevalerie* (dating from shortly after 1350), Geoffrey de Charny maintains that undertaking long journeys is more honourable by chivalric standards than taking part in tournaments.⁸ Knights who are constantly *en route* deserve more respect than knights who undertake journeys occasionally. What is involved here, therefore, is the rule 'Qui plus fait, miex vault' (He who achieves more, is the more worthy). The long journeys referred to here were journeys to Spain, Rhodes, Cyprus, the Holy Land, Constantinople, Prussia and Livonia. In these areas, on the borders of Christendom, battles were fought against the infidels. But journeys were also undertaken within Europe; the Hundred Years War (1337–1453), in particular, provided an opportunity for knights from numerous countries to show their courage in battle.

Several of the destinations mentioned above did not arouse attention until the early fourteenth century. In 1291 the heathen had succeeded in taking Acre from the Christians and this meant that several chivalric orders were forced to move their seats from the Holy Land elsewhere (Rhodes, Cyprus, Prussia). It was these 'new' destinations which enjoyed widespread popularity in the fourteenth century. Prussia, which was – comparatively – close (at least as viewed from north-west Europe), was undeniably the leading area in this respect; Werner Paravicini remarks that it was more likely than not that a fourteenth-century knight had visited Prussia at least once during his life.⁹ About half a century later, Berry King of Arms of France (d. shortly after 1455), who was in the service of King Charles VII, accordingly refers to 'cent mille personnes de tous les royaumes crestiens' (100,000 people from all Christian kingdoms) taking part in the 'Reses de Pruce'¹⁰ (journeys to Prussia). The Grand Master of the Order of the Teutonic Knights resided in Königsberg and it was there that noblemen from all over Europe could assemble to prepare themselves, together with the knights of the Teutonic Order, for the struggle against the heathen Lithuanians and Russians.¹¹ Prussia was the impressive stage of a courtly lifestyle and entourage which could not be found to the same extent anywhere else in Europe. Although a journey to Prussia consequently was an important notion for knights from all over Europe,

still most visitors came from the Low Countries and the neighbouring Rhine area.

After the fall of Acre, not only did the destinations of the knights' journeys change, but the knights' private initiatives became more prominent than ever. There was no longer any need to wait for full-scale crusades to begin, but it was possible for each individual knight to decide if he wished, or was able, to leave home – and if so, for how long. *De mantel van eren* (*The Cloak of Honour*), a short fourteenth-century poem from the Low Countries, refers to a knight who has fought against the heathen for twelve years on end.¹² When he arrives back home his sovereign gives him a warm welcome, but soon afterwards he once again decides to leave for 'heydenesse'¹³ (the lands of the heathen, the East). Friedrich Kreusspeck, an Austrian knight, wandered through Europe on a chivalric journey which lasted for over four and a half years; after his death he was known as 'der lantfarer'¹⁴ (the traveller). From a practical point of view, however, it was easier to undertake short, successive journeys. This was particularly true for knights from France and England, who, because of the contribution the Crown required each knight to make to the Hundred Years War, were only granted permission to leave when the combatants had declared a truce. There was such a temporary peace in the period 1389–94, and on this occasion the number of journeys from England and France increased dramatically.¹⁵ Berry King of Arms was aware of the deleterious effect of war on the knights' travelling: in his view, French knights and knights from other kingdoms bordering on France travelled to Prussia 'devant les guerres de France'¹⁶ (before the wars of France).

The changed pattern in the knights' travelling in the fourteenth century was sometimes heavily criticized outside the knights' own circle; information about this, however, is particularly scarce. Some clear examples can be found in Middle Dutch literature. In the *Boec van der wraken* (*The Book of Revenge*; c. 1345–52), for instance, possibly written by the Antwerp town clerk Jan van Boendale, the 'fashionable' small-scale private journeys are rated lower than a large-scale action to liberate the Holy Land as advocated by the author.¹⁷ Individual journeys are too ineffective and are undertaken especially 'Om te hebben der werelt ere'¹⁸ (to gain worldly honour), he says. In a sense Jacob van Maerlant had expressed a similar sentiment as early as 1291–2, when in *Van den lande van oversee* (*On the Land across the Sea*) – written in response to the fall of Acre –

he called journeys to Tunis and Aragon surrogates for journeys to the Holy Land.¹⁹ The anonymous author of the short poem 'Twee ghesellen die wouden varen over zee' ('Two companions who wanted to travel across the sea'; fourteenth century) even goes one step further by questioning whether it is wise, after all, to make a journey to the Holy Land: would it not be more advisable to stay at home so as to be able to give military support to the liege lord or to friends in situations of sudden tension?²⁰ In actual fact this kind of argument was a common enough reason for staying at home; it was an important consideration for English and French knights, as we have seen, but Georg von Ehingen's father too, for example, urged his son to visit the Holy Land after visiting Rhodes, so as to realize an ambition which he himself, occupied by military tasks at home, had never achieved: 'Dann wie woll er all sein tag ain grosse begirde gehapt hette die hailligen stett und land zuo suoehen, dass dann sinthalb uss vill grossen, tapffern ursachen nie hette mügen gesin'²¹ (For although he had always had a great desire to visit the Holy City and the Holy Land, in his case this had proved impossible due to many great, brave causes). Heinrich der Teichner (Austria, d. 1377 or shortly afterwards) also criticizes the knights' *wanderlust* in general and the journeys to Prussia in particular; in his view, knights should rather fulfil their duties at home with regard to widows and orphans and with regard to their wives and children.²²

In opposition to this group of critical authors, however, there were, at least for the time being, a number of writers who championed the chivalric ideal of knights travelling to various places to prove their courage. In a short poem the King of Odenwald (Franconia, c. 1340–50), for instance, denounces the objectionable behaviour of – German – robber-knights, who fail to go to 'Lamparten, Pruzssen und Tuscan'²³ (Lombardy, Prussia and Tuscany). In several poems by the French courtly writer Eustache Deschamps the most distant destinations are mentioned, in a favourable sense.²⁴ In *Le Confort d'ami* (1357) Guillaume de Machaut outlines the exploits of King John of Bohemia (d. 1346); in England we find the famous portrait of the knight in the 'General Prologue' to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1385–1400) and in Italy Thomas III of Saluzzo composed his *Chevalier errant* (1394–5), in which Galeazzo de Mantua's exploits are described.²⁵

Heralds were among those who bore witness to the knights' conduct in battle. Evidence for this behaviour can be found in

literary as well as non-literary sources from the Low Countries and the Rhine area. When John I, duke of Brabant, had won a tournament in Windsor in 1279, organized by King Edward I of England, his fame was spread by 'riddere ende giroude'²⁶ (knights and heralds), according to Jan van Heelu in his *Rijmkroniek* (*Verse Chronicle*; Brabant, c. 1290–1). In the prologue to his chronicle, Jean Froissart (who found his patrons, among others, in Hainault and the Low Countries) says that he has recorded much of his information from the lips of 'rois d'armes nommés hiraus et lors marescaux'²⁷ (kings of arms, called 'heralds', and their marshals). When Albert of Bavaria, count of Holland, went to war against the Frisians in 1396, no fewer than nineteen heralds accompanied him on his campaign.²⁸ Just like the fourteenth-century knights, heralds too travelled far; the herald who accompanied Georg von Ehingen on his second journey is therefore no exception. In *Van den borchgrave van Couchi* (*The Viscount of Couchi*; Flanders, c. 1330–50) a herald 'Bien Argent' appears, who was well-acquainted with the country and customs 'In heydinesse, in kerstinede' (both in the lands of the heathen and in Christendom), as well as with 'die wapine der heeren'²⁹ (the noblemen's coats of arms). The author says that the herald 'Bien Argent' received much honour during his life because of this knowledge. Even at the end of the fifteenth century the herald Georg Elsasser went forth 'vill ryche upganges und nederganges der sonnen durch zo zehen' (to traverse many countries, both in the east and the west) with the intention 'bas erfarnier wederomb zo unss zo keren' (of returning to us [the duke of Cleves] with more experience) at a later date.³⁰ On 13 April 1338, Carlisle Herald returned to the court of Edward III, the king of England, from a five-year journey which had taken him to Prussia, Livonia, the Holy Land, North Africa, Spain and France.³¹ In 1367, 'Scoenhoven', herald of Count John of Blois, travelled to Spain, at his own request, and in the same year also travelled to Prussia.³² In 1377 the herald Peter Suchenwirt travelled to Prussia in the retinue of Duke Albert III of Austria and recorded his experiences in the poem *Von Herzog Albrechts Ritterschaft*, which he wrote for those members of the Austrian nobility who had stayed at home.³³ In 1390, 'Zelander', a herald from Holland, let it be known that he 'in Barbarien riden soude'³⁴ (would travel to Barbary), apparently in connection with the duke of Bourbon's journey to North Africa in the same year.³⁵ In *Le Livre de la description des pays* Berry King of Arms, in the middle of the fifteenth century,

described the knowledge in the fields of geography and ethnology that he had acquired on his journeys.³⁶ As has already become apparent in the case of the 'herfarnen herolt' (the experienced herald) who was to accompany Georg von Ehingen on his second journey, some heralds had a good command of languages. The German herald Johann Holland (first half of the fifteenth century), for instance, claimed to speak no fewer than six languages, viz. Latin, German, Polish, French, English and Hungarian.³⁷ The town clerk Jan van Boendale tries to belittle the heralds' travelling when he writes in *Der leken spiegel* (*The Laymen's Mirror*; Brabant, 1325–30): 'Dats der yrauden vite, / Datsi thaers selfs huse node beten, / Alsi elre om niet moghen eten'³⁸ (Such is the heralds' way of life, that they dismount unwillingly at their own houses if they can get a free meal elsewhere).

There are some authors who try to give an explanation for all this knightly travelling. One of them is Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405), chancellor of the king of Cyprus. In the prologue to *Le Songe du vieil pelerin* (1389) he refers to an earlier work – *Le Pelerinage du pauvre pelerin et reconfort de son pere et de sa mere*, intended for Bureau de la Rivière and to be dated to the early 1380s – in which *inter alia* 'neuf . . . journées singulieres des chevaliers preux' (nine separate journeys by brave knights) were described 'par lesquelx l'en peut parvenir a proesse et souveraine vaillance en ce monde et comme preux a la table du roy, et a la fin a la table de l'Aiglelet Occis lassus en Paradis'³⁹ (by which one can arrive at prowess and supreme valour in this world and, as a brave man, at the king's table, and eventually at the table of the Lamb That Was Slain, on high in Paradise). What appears to be important in this quotation, apart from a possible echo of the tradition of the Nine Worthies, is the connection between 'travelling', 'valour' and the 'honour' associated with these. The 'honour' which Philippe de Mézières brings up here has a dual aspect: it simultaneously comprises both 'worldly honour' (in the sense of reputation) and 'heavenly honour' (in the sense of heavenly bliss). It must be observed that worldly honour is 'translated' in terms of a social advancement, so to speak: as a brave knight one has a chance of being invited to the king's table.

In the German Empire – of which the Low Countries formed a constitutional part – such possibilities for the knights' social advancement as existed in France and England were lacking.⁴⁰ There was no strong central authority here; the Interregnum

(1256–73) had resulted in immense social disintegration. In the second half of the thirteenth century numerous castles were built; around 1300 some 10,000 had been constructed.⁴¹ Robber-knights were a veritable scourge (cf. the quotation from the King of Odenwald given above). The Rhine area in particular was made up of a collection of numerous small principalities (a situation which, incidentally, was to continue into the nineteenth century). It was only through the confraternities of knights and tourneying societies which appeared in somewhat larger numbers from the end of the fourteenth century that the German nobility united, against the threatening leagues of towns on the one hand, and against the supremacy of the territorial princes on the other.⁴²

It is against this social background that the German (and Dutch) genre of *Ehrenreden* arose.⁴³ Without a doubt these are the principal witnesses to the travelling habits of fourteenth-century knights. From the period c. 1290–1420 forty such poems are known to us at present.⁴⁴ *Ehrenreden* are short poems of praise, with an average length of about 200 to 300 lines, in which the virtuous life of a knight, usually a deceased knight, is described and in which, by way of conclusion, his coat of arms is skilfully described. Since the early *Ehrenreden* take the form of personification allegories, in which all sorts of virtues speak, they can be seen as a kind of *Minnereden* (poems of love).⁴⁵ In the early fourteenth century, *Minnereden* – especially those in which historical characters appeared – were immensely successful, particularly in the Rhine area, and it does not seem to be a coincidence therefore that it was in this region in particular that the genre of *Ehrenreden* was to become widely known.⁴⁶

Around 1340–50 the genre of *Ehrenreden* as a whole underwent a major change as far as its contents were concerned: from now on, instead of describing a number of virtues, they focussed mainly on the virtue of ‘courage’, which is made concrete in the shape of a biographical survey. In the descriptions injuries and mutilations are mentioned expressly, as well as the fact that a particular journey was made at the knight’s own expense. The occupational profiles of several authors working within this genre from 1340 to 1350 (the Austrian herald Peter Suchenwirt, a herald from Cleves and Gelre Herald, who wrote in Dutch) seem to suggest that the innovation in the genre can be ascribed to heralds. The biographies are a mixture of *topoi* and specific, personalized characteristics. Chaucer’s portrait of the knight contains so many similar elements on the level of both

topoi and specific detail that the question as to whether he might have been familiar with the continental genre appears to be justified.⁴⁷ Perhaps he had become acquainted with the genre through his father-in-law, Sir Payn Roet, the English King of Arms Guienne, or Chandos Herald, who is known to have come from Hainault.⁴⁸

The descriptions of knightly exploits by heralds in *Ehrenreden* can be seen as a combination of facts which they themselves had observed and of information which they had received from colleagues or other reliable spokesmen. The herald from Cleves, who wrote an *Ehrenrede* about Heinrich von Eschweiler (d. 1419), tells us that he heard stories about the knight in Constantinople:

Zu Constantinoplin
Ich hort von dem ritter fin
Fürwar sagen, das er tätte
Manig scharmützeln aus der stette
Auf die hayden zû manger stund
Der frum ritter ward dar wund.⁴⁹

(In Constantinople I heard it said in truth about the good knight that he had made many sallies from the city against the heathen; the brave knight was injured there.)

Just as there must have been a continuous exchange of information in the sphere of heraldry, there must have been an exchange of information concerning current knowledge about the knights' feats too. In Prussia those heralds who happened to be present at the time decided by mutual agreement which knights would be allowed to take a seat at the *Ehrentisch* (Table of Honour), established by the Grand Master of the Order of the Teutonic Knights, and also who was allowed to take the most honourable position at table.⁵⁰

The assumption that *Ehrenreden* constituted a recognizable genre for the medieval public is confirmed by the occurrence of several literary 'transformations'. These concern texts that were written – and meant to be understood by the public – against the background of the regular examples of the genre. Around 1356–7 Peter Suchenwirt wrote a parody which complies with all the characteristics of the genre, with respect to both its form and its contents, but in which he describes the life of a fictitious anti-hero (the knight travels to Prussia, for instance, but has already returned before vespers!), in combination with a mock coat of arms.⁵¹ With its ludicrous description of objectionable knightly behaviour the text represented the

mundus inversus and it probably functioned in the festive context of the annual Shrovetide celebrations.⁵² The *Rappoltsteiner Parzifal* (Alsace c. 1331–6), which mainly consists of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, ends with an epilogue by Philipp Colin, which has the form of an *Ehrenrede*, in which the author flatteringly depicts his patron as an ideal courtly lover.⁵³ At the end of the fourteenth century, the Dutch Gelre Herald strung six *Ehrenreden* together in a cycle, culminating in a sceptical concluding poem.⁵⁴

The connection between travelling, courage and honour mentioned above is expressed internationally in a wide variety of texts. In the course of the fourteenth century, militant behaviour resulting in worldly honour and promising heavenly bliss, behaviour as described in the prologue to *Le Songe du vieil pelerin* (mentioned above), is referred to by means of the noun *waeldaet* (good deeds) in some courtly and chivalric texts.⁵⁵ The term originates in Christian doctrine and can be contrasted with the term *misdaet* (sin). In this way the knights' travelling habits were given a Christian content, not only on a factual level (the struggle against the heathen), but also on the more abstract level of inner motives. At least, that is how the knights' travelling is presented by authors such as Froissart, Gelre Herald and others.

The forty known *Ehrenreden* all originate in the German Empire. With respect to the way these *Ehrenreden* have come down to us, two centres can be discerned: the Rhine area (Gelre Herald) and Austria (Peter Suchenwirt), while in the area in between they have survived, more or less by chance, in miscellanies, which often include *Minnereden* as well. Although a number of associated texts were produced c. 1330–40 in the circle around Count William III of Holland–Hainault,⁵⁶ the contrast with England and France requires some further explanation. From a literary-historical point of view, heralds (as well as the earlier authors of *Ehrenreden*) belong to a group of so-called *sprekers* (speakers), that is, itinerant poets who recited short poems (such as the above-mentioned *De mantel van eren*, *Van den lande van oversee* and *Twee ghesellen die wouden varen over zee*) at the courts and in the towns.⁵⁷ This type of itinerant poet, which was common in the German Empire in the fourteenth century, was found rarely or not at all in France and England because of a different social development (that is, the formation of a central royal court). They can be seen as the heirs of the thirteenth-century – German – *Spruchdichter*.⁵⁸ The literary activities of German heralds

and heralds from the Low Countries were unfolding more than half a century earlier than elsewhere in Europe, and they are centred more strongly than anywhere else on the old chivalric ideal of fighting and gaining honour, and on preserving this ideal.⁵⁹

Around 1340–50 German heralds focussed their attention on the genre of the *Ehrenreden*, among others, which they changed with regard to contents, by gearing it towards the chivalric ideal they had in mind. For their poems, they selected knights who were still living up to this ideal, in order to hold them up as models to those knights who no longer put this into practice. In the late fourteenth-century *Gelre Wapenboek* (*Gelre Armorial*; Brussels, Royal Library Albert I, 15.652–6), Gelre Herald, for instance, collected *Ehrenreden* about knights from areas as far apart as Holland, the Rhine area, Holstein and Switzerland. In the *Ehrenreden*, the crusading ideal as it was propagated in France and England was combined with the notion that chivalric fighting could also be justly undertaken in several other places within Europe; if English and French knights were particularly involved in the Hundred Years War, knights from the German Empire would travel to other places in Europe as well, if necessary, in order to prove their chivalry. In the German Empire, unlike England and France, there was no central monarchical authority restricting the knights' freedom of action. Furthermore, for the knights from the German Empire putting the chivalric ideal into practice was not a step towards social advancement and success in society. Apparently, honour for them was still a sufficient reason to comply with the old ideal.

In the course of the fourteenth century a special variant of the chivalric ideal thus manifested itself, promoted by heralds and embodied in knights who travelled far from home, preferably at their own initiative and at their own expense, so as to gain honour in battle. Literary texts, such as the *Ehrenreden*, contain many details illustrating this particular development. Texts from the Low Countries, such as Gelre Herald's writings, agree with texts originating in other parts of the German Empire, in that, from c. 1350, an active chivalric ideal was promoted especially in texts composed by heralds from these countries.

In the early decades of the fifteenth century, the genre of the *Ehrenreden* was waning. Around 1400 many of the destinations the knights used to visit were lost to them. Since 1386 there had been a Christian ruler in Lithuania (Jagiello of Lithuania); around 1400

the journeys to Prussia were past their peak and became a matter of minor importance only, especially after the battle of Tannenberg (1410). Around the same time the Hospitallers on Rhodes were in serious trouble. The great battle against the Turks at Nicopolis (1396) had ended with a crushing defeat for the western knights. A more important reason, however, was that the number of knights who lived up to the ideal set out in the *Ehrenreden* was steadily declining: in the second half of the fourteenth century the function of the genre had, after all, been to breathe new life into a languishing ideal. After 1400 the divide between ideal and reality seems to have become so great that the gap could no longer be bridged. The view of travelling as an ideal chivalric pattern of behaviour, enabling the knights to carry out heroic deeds, survived, but from the early fifteenth century onwards it turned out that this could no longer give a sense of fulfilment to their lives. However, texts such as Georg von Ehingen's biography – but also gravestones, memorial glass plates and memorial shields – still bear witness to this ideal, as lingering echoes.⁶⁰

TRANSLATED BY ARNOLD J. KREPS AND FRANK VAN MEURS

NOTES

- 1 E. von Kausler, ed., *Denkmäler altniederländischer Sprache und Litteratur*, vol. III (Leipzig: Fues, 1866), p. 183, lines 29–31 (I have added a comma in line 31).
- 2 For what follows, see G. Ehrmann, ed., *Georg von Ehingen. Reisen nach der Ritterschaft. Edition, Untersuchung, Kommentar*, 2 vols. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 262/1–2 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1979); cf. also S. Schmitz, *Die Pilgerreise Philipps d. Ä. von Katzenelnbogen in Prosa und Vers. Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur* 11 (Munich: Fink, 1990), esp. pp. 152–9.
- 3 Ehrmann, ed., *Reisen nach der Ritterschaft*, vol. I, p. 37.
- 4 Ibid., vol. I, p. 41.
- 5 S. Ferris, 'Chronicle, Chivalric Biography, and Family Tradition in Fourteenth-Century England', in L. D. Benson and J. Leyrerle, eds., *Chivalric Literature. Essays on Relations between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages. Studies in Medieval Culture* 14 (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1980), pp. 25–38; see also W. T. Cotton, 'Teaching the Motifs of Chivalric Biography', in H. Chickering and T. H. Seiler, eds., *The Study of Chivalry. Resources and Approaches* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1988), pp. 583–609.

- 6 G. Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris: Fayard, 1984).
- 7 M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 19–21.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 12–15 (and the notes to these pages).
- 9 W. Paravicini, 'Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels', *Historische Zeitschrift* 232 (1981), 26.
- 10 E.-T. Hamy, ed., *Le Livre de la description des pays de Gilles le Bouvier, dit Berry, premier roi d'armes de Charles VII, roi de France* (Paris: Leroux, 1908), p. 117.
- 11 For an extensive discussion of the journeys to Prussia, see W. Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels*, vol. 1. Beihefte der Francia 17/1 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989) (two more volumes to come).
- 12 J. F. Willems, ed., 'Sproken (fabliaux)', *Belgisch museum* 10 (1846), 51–98, no. iv.
- 13 Ibid., no. iv, line 147.
- 14 Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, p. 205, n. 142.
- 15 Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, p. 102, announces that he will return to this point in vol. II; see also pp. 122, 188 and 215–18.
- 16 Hamy, ed., *Livre de la description*, p. 116.
- 17 F.-A. Snellaert, ed., *Nederlandsche gedichten uit de veertiende eeuw van Jan Boendale, Hein van Aken en anderen* (Brussels: Hayez, 1869), p. 466, lines 1855–72. For the *Boec van der wraken*, see P. C. van der Eerden, 'Eschatology in the Boec van der wraken', in W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen, eds., *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia*, series 1, studia 15 (Louvain University Press, 1988), pp. 425–40. In this poem the author describes (in the words of Van der Eerden) 'how God's wrath has always fallen on the sinner in the past, how this is still taking place every day, and how it will reach a climax in the approaching eschaton' (p. 427).
- 18 Snellaert, ed., *Nederlandsche gedichten*, p. 466, line 1857.
- 19 J. van Mierlo, ed., *Uit de Strophische gedichten van Jacob van Maerlant* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1954), p. 150, lines 118–30.
- 20 Willems, ed., 'Sproken', no. vii.
- 21 Ehrmann, ed., *Reisen nach der Ritterschaft*, vol. 1, p. 29.
- 22 H. Niewöhner, ed., *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, vol. II. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 46 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), no. 353.
- 23 E. Schröder, ed., 'Die Gedichte des Königs vom Odenwalde', *Archiv für hessische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* n.s. 3 (1904), 1–92, no. XI, line 53.
- 24 Cf. the 'Index des noms géographiques' in G. Raynaud, ed., *Oeuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, vol. x (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1901), pp. 133–55 *passim*.
- 25 See E. Hoepffner, ed., *Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, vol. III (Paris: Champion, 1921), p. 103, lines 2923ff.; L. D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 24, lines 43–78; Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 18–19, respectively.

- 26 J. F. Willems, ed., *Rijmkronijk van Jan van Heelu betreffende den slag van Woeringen, van het jaer 1288* (Brussels: Hayez, 1836), line 940.
- 27 J. M. B. C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, ed., *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. II (Brussels: Victor Devaux, 1867), p. 11 (see also p. 7).
- 28 W. A. Beelaerts van Blokland, *Beyeren quondam Gelre armorum rex de Ruyris. Eene historisch-heraldische studie* (The Hague: s.n., 1933), p. 4.
- 29 M. de Vries, ed., *Van den borchgrave van Couchi* (Leiden: Brill, 1887), lines 2411, 2413 and 2415, respectively.
- 30 G. Pietzsch, *Archivalische Forschungen zur Geschichte der Musik an den Höfen der Grafen und Herzöge von Kleve-Jülich-Berg (Ravensberg) bis zum Erlöschen der Linie Jülich-Kleve im Jahre 1609*. Beiträge zur rheinischen Musikgeschichte 88 (Cologne: Volk-Verlag, 1971), p. 63.
- 31 A. R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages. An Inquiry into the Growth of the Armorial Function of Heralds*, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 34.
- 32 Beelaerts van Blokland, *Beyeren quondam Gelre*, p. 5.
- 33 A. Primisser, ed., *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke aus dem vierzehnten Jahrhunderte. Ein Beytrag zur Zeit- und Sittengeschichte* (Vienna, 1827; rpt. Vienna: Geyer, 1961), no. IV.
- 34 The Hague, National Archives, Archives of the counts of Holland 1244-i, f. 8ov.
- 35 For this journey, see L. Mirot, 'Une expédition française en Tunisie au xive siècle. Le siège de Mahdia (1390)', *Revue des études historiques* 97 (1931), 357-406.
- 36 Hamy, *Livre de la description*.
- 37 M. Mueller, ed., 'Der "Ehrenbrief" Jakob Putrichs von Reicherts-hausen, die "Turnierreime" Johann Hollands, der "Namenkatalog" Ulrich Fuetrers: Texte mit Einleitung und Kommentar (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York City University, 1985), p. 211.
- 38 M. de Vries, ed., *Der leken spiegel, leerdicht van den jare 1330, door Jan Boendale, gezegd Jan de Clerc, schepenclerk te Antwerpen*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1844-8), vol. III, 4, lines 190-2.
- 39 G. W. Coopland, ed., *Philippe de Mézières, Chancellor of Cyprus. Le Songe du vieil pelerin (1389)*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 14 (quotation on p. 85).
- 40 F. R. H. Du Boulay, *Germany in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), and 'The Forming of German Identity', *History Today* 40 (1990), December, 14-21.
- 41 Du Boulay, *Germany*, p. 69.
- 42 W. Meyer, 'Turniergesellschaften. Bemerkungen zur sozialgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Turniere im Spätmittelalter', in J. Fleckenstein, ed., *Das ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter. Beiträge zu einer vergleichenden Formen- und Verhaltensgeschichte des Rittertums*. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 80 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985), pp. 500-12; R. Barber and J. Barker, *Tournaments. Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell,

- 1989), pp. 189–90; H. Kruse, W. Paravicini and A. Ranft, eds., *Ritterorden und Adelsgesellschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Deutschland. Ein systematisches Verzeichnis*. Kieler Werkstücke, Reihe D, Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte des späten Mittelalters, 1 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 1991).
- 43 The most important studies in this field are S. C. Van D'Elden, 'Peter Suchenwirt and Heraldic Poetry' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1974); T. Nolte, ed., *Lauda post mortem. Die deutschen und niederländischen Ehrenreden des Mittelalters*. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 1, 562 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 1983); C. Brinker, *Von manigen helden gute tat. Geschichte als Exempel bei Peter Suchenwirt*. Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie 30 (Bern: Lang, 1987); W. van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap. Heraut Gelre en zijn ereredes*. Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen 1 (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1990), respectively.
- 44 For a survey, see Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, Appendix i.
- 45 Cf. Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 126–35.
- 46 M. Rheinheimer, ed., *Rheinische Minnereden. Untersuchungen und Edition*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 144 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1975).
- 47 Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 146–8.
- 48 The information about Chaucer's father-in-law is derived from A. Wagner, *Heralds of England. A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), p. 18. For Chandos Herald's biography, see D. B. Tyson, ed., *La Vie du Prince Noir by Chandos Herald*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 147 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1975), pp. 14–18; additional information in Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, p. 235, n. 269.
- 49 Nolte, *Lauda post mortem*, Textanhang B, lines 73–8.
- 50 For further information about the *Ehrentisch*, see Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, pp. 316–34.
- 51 G. E. Friess, ed., 'Fünf unedirte Ehrenreden Peter Suchenwirts', *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 88 (1877), 99–126, no. v; Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 124–5.
- 52 The poem also functioned as a satire on the peasant class and is the earliest example of a tradition that is continued in texts such as *Der Ring* by Heinrich Wittenwiller (c. 1400) and *The Tournament of Totenham* (mid-fifteenth century). Cf. F. Gies, *The Knight in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 203; Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 124–5.
- 53 K. Schorbach, ed., *Parzifal von Claus Wisse und Philipp Colin (1331–1336)*. Elsässische Literaturdenkmäler aus dem xiv–xvii. Jahrhundert 5 (Strasburg, 1888; rpt. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974), columns 845–58; Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, p. 131.
- 54 V. Bouton, ed., *Wapenboek ou armorial de 1334 à 1372 ... Précédé de poésies*

- héraldiques par Gelre, héraut d'armes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Bouton, 1881), pp. 67–90; Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 169–71.
- 55 Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 172–81.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 57 Cf. F. P. van Oostrom, 'Achtergronden van een nieuwe vorm: de kleinschalige epiek van Willem van Hildegarsberch', in *Vorm en functie in tekst en taal. Bundel opstellen verschenen ter gelegenheid van de voltooiing van het honderdste deel van het 'Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde'* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp. 48–72, and T. Meder, 'Willem van Hildegarsberch: spreker tussen hof en stad', in H. Pleij et al., *Op belofte van profijt. Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de middeleeuwen. Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen 4* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 151–65 and 375–9.
- 58 K. Franz, *Studien zur Soziologie des Spruchdichters in Deutschland im späten 13. Jahrhundert*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 111 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1974).
- 59 Van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap*, pp. 43–55.
- 60 K. Pilz, 'Der Totenschild in Nürnberg und seine deutschen Vorstufen', *Anzeiger Germanisches Nationalmuseum* (1936–9), 81, 94–5, 102 and plate 15; Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, p. 25, esp. n. 2; Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 183 and plate 41; D'A. J. D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown. The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe 1325–1520* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 478–89, esp. p. 488.

CHAPTER 4

The rise of urban literature in the Low Countries

Herman Pleij

In general, late medieval literature of the Low Countries has a poor reputation, and as a result little study is devoted to it. The primary characteristic ascribed to it is *burgerlijk* (bourgeois or middle-class) which in itself is not incorrect. There can be no doubt that starting in the fourteenth century Brabant and Flanders came to form the hub of literary life, stimulated by the relatively rapid spread of literacy in this area. Literacy grew in response to the special demands of trade and industry, which soon brought the children of well-to-do burghers, and later craftsmen as well, into special city schools for the study of practical subjects. In addition there was rapid growth of a broad intellectual middle class of clerks and officials at work in municipal administration and the judiciary. What emerged from all this was a complex system of guilds and fraternities which became the spawning ground for genuine literary activity, not only because these groups offered possibilities for organization but also because they functioned, together with the city government, as patrons of the literary arts. For literature offered itself as an attractive means to defend, legitimize, ornament and even expand newly acquired power, vested interests and ambitions.

But this is not what those who make condescending remarks about middle-class literature have in mind. The idea behind such statements is that literature as *belles-lettres* was corrupted by simple-minded didacticism and by dubious forms of entertainment. Literature of this time is said to be dominated by amateurs who simply spun out their doggerel and who, in their love of idle entertainment, did not shrink from introducing a boorish 'realism' into their farces and novellas. We shall not dwell any further on this nineteenth-century-style aesthetic approach, which says more about post-romantic literary taste than about the significance of the literature in question. But this frame of mind is responsible for the continuing

lack of interest in texts from the period 1350–1550, which are dismissed with epithets such as ‘vulgar’, ‘trivial’, ‘artificial’, or even a label like ‘warmed-up leftovers of a literary legacy’ and ‘imitations produced by a threadbare imagination’.¹

But is it possible that a vigorous middle-class like that of the powerful, thriving cities of Brussels, Louvain, Mechlin, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges would have been satisfied with – and continued to sponsor – a literature which did not directly answer its needs and ambitions but which fled into lamentations about an unreal past or into second-rate imitations of courtly chivalric literature? And supposing that this is a correct characterization of the literature, should it not also be true of the visual arts and architecture which developed in this same milieu? Or did these artistic media lend themselves to an apt and direct expression of the spirit of the city and its institutions? If so, there is an extremely odd discrepancy between the various cultural activities in the city, especially in view of the fact that writers, painters and architects usually worked in close co-operation and not infrequently engaged in two or more distinct branches of artistic activity.

The main point I should like to make is that urban literature of the late Middle Ages played an active role in forming, defending and propagating what came to be called typical middle-class virtues, which revolved around the key concepts of practicality and utilitarianism. To achieve this goal it made use of an extensive arsenal of rhetorical techniques, creating its own art of persuasion and a whole series of new text types. These were intended to offer consolation for whatever might disrupt the life of the burgher, and to provide him with the intellectual equipment needed to withstand the onslaught of forces which could strike and throw him off balance at any moment; the forces, that is, of fate, love and death.²

But unlike architecture and the visual arts, this medium, full of allegory and other linguistic techniques employed to heighten the persuasive effect, could not be transported into a modern setting; modern readers approached these artistic signs as carriers of timeless aesthetic meaning and subsequently rejected them because they were at odds with what they themselves had come to understand as *belles-lettres*. Moreover, the manifestly instrumental nature of this literature immediately stamped it (and still does so today) as inferior in quality, as art enslaved to tendentious motives – a judgement

which oddly enough ignores the fact that all of medieval literature sprang from the same didactic soil. Whether at court, in a monastery or convent, or in a city, literature was written on commission with a preconceived social purpose in mind.

How, then, does late medieval literature set about its task? As never before, it annexes and adapts texts, complexes of story material and models from earlier times, all of which helps explain such characterizations as 'vulgarized imitations'. Yet even the suggestion of plagiarism here would be extremely unhistorical, for the medieval understanding of art attached little value to originality. Since anyone could simply make something up, originality was, in fact, suspect. Art was in essence a masterly display of skill brought to bear on familiar literary material and examples from the Bible, the classics or the medieval past, reworked in keeping with contemporary rules of art. A few examples can illustrate this procedure.

A chivalric novel in verse which originated in courtly culture offered middle-class culture attractive possibilities for identification, provided that it was tailored to the demands of urban ambitions and ethics. In addition the form had to be adapted to the new communication possibilities of a broader public, brought about mainly by the printing press: that is, the possibilities of reading to oneself or hearing works read aloud in a small circle of listeners. This explains why a thirteenth-century verse-romance like *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* was altered on a few points of content and rewritten as prose for the printed version of 1516, which proved very successful with a middle-class public. An important scene is the one portraying Heinric's elevation to knighthood. He has to swear that he will uphold all the traditional knightly virtues such as loyalty to his lord and the protection of widows and orphans. But the prose version adds that he must, under all circumstances, be creditworthy:

Betaelt wel waer ghi vaert oft keert, so sal men eer van u spreken.

(Pay generously wherever you travel, whether by land or by sea, then people will speak honourably of you.)

The obligatory concept of honour is maintained in the text, but it is now linked to a value exclusively associated with urban ways of thinking: the knight should be equipped not only with a trusty sword but also with a well-filled pocketbook.³

We repeatedly encounter small changes like this one, together with the strong tendency to present the annexed knightly world in

the new dimension of contemporary sayings and adages. These, too, were inserted in order to clarify the knightly world's relation to the middle-class world and in general to strengthen the contemporary grasp of the divine plan of salvation. The courtly knight Floris, for example, in *Floris ende Blancefloer*, printed around 1517, uses a comparison which appears to be taken directly from the market square to describe his instructive and moving experience of being tormented by love. All joy, he says, has ebbed out of him 'like an eel slipping out of a hand'. This figure of speech was not, of course, part of the original rhymed text. Additions and changes of this kind have prompted the use of the term 'vulgarizations' and the subsequent dismissal of these works as mere byproducts in favour of concentration on the original courtly texts.⁴

Oddly enough, this whole dismissive procedure is followed much less readily when it comes to paintings from the same period, even though they are dominated by similar phenomena. Around 1490, for example, a certain Arnold van den Bossche made an altarpiece commissioned by the local shoemakers' guild. This portrayal of the martyrdom of the saints Crispin and Crispinian (patron saints of the guild) is so thoroughly dominated by the interests of the commissioning party that it looks almost blasphemous, or at least tasteless, to us. The centre panel consists of a simultaneous depiction of the various tortures from which, in keeping with the legend, the saints emerge unscathed in every case. The startling thing is the stress placed on the shoemaking trade. The tortures are inflicted with shoemakers' tools. The saints are tied to a tree and tormented with awls under their fingernails and toenails. The executioners also use shoemakers' knives to cut strips of skin from their naked backs. But the torturers themselves are miraculously pelted with awls and bodkins flying through the air. To make things unmistakably clear a basket with these tools is depicted in the foreground, and all the people in the painting are wearing striking shoes, ranging from a kind of house slipper to the most expensive boots.⁵

By now it may be clear that we would do better to ask different questions of literature. What was the function of texts like these in producing a new body of thought and in developing and experimenting with new attitudes? What did they propagate, what did they suppress, what did they try to hold on to? These questions at first sight seem to ignore the entertainment function of literature,

which at the time was considered at least as important. This is not the case at all, however, since humour and entertainment were made expressly functional in late medieval conceptions of literature. They belonged to the arsenal of the means of persuasion because they were able to intensify attention and slip in the message in an unobtrusive way: *ridendo dicere verum*, to say the truth with laughter. Moreover, according to medical opinion it was occasionally necessary to ease one's mind in this way. This idea is thematic in an often related anecdote about John the Evangelist. One day while John is sitting in a circle with his disciples they all burst out laughing. A man carrying a bow looks at them disapprovingly and asks how it is possible that such pious people behave with so little restraint. John points to the bow in the man's hand and asks if he always keeps it strung taut. No, replies the man, it would soon break if I did. Then John explains that the same is true of people. If they do not relax from time to time, they become too strained and break their spirit.⁶

Urban culture also displayed an increased interest in this function of literature. And here, too, adaptations were made. The simplest consists in the addition of a foreword or preface which contains insistent instructions about how the book should be read, as well as a statement about how salutary such a reading will be. The prose version of *Huyge van Bourdeus*, for example, printed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is accompanied by the following guidelines which are now found in many such texts. The work is primarily intended to provide pleasure

ende dye sinnen des menschen daermede te versolaceren als si met eeniger melancolien ende swaricheden belast worden, hetzi van eenich ingheven des vyants oft van swaricheyt des bloets, want melancolie oock swaricheyt genereert ende maect dicwil grof bloet dat menichwerf den mensche siecte toebrenget.

(and to cheer up people's spirits if they are troubled by any melancholy or heaviness, whether brought on by the devil or by heaviness of the blood; for melancholy also generates heaviness and often thickens the blood, and this frequently makes a person ill.)

With this nearly medical explanation the entertainment aspect of literature is made explicitly functional as a way to counteract melancholy. Just how middle-class Netherlandic culture was, to consider such adaptations necessary, is revealed by similar modifications in the texts themselves. In the *Limborch* text mentioned earlier, the story in the original version opens with a certain Duke

Otto expressing a desire to go out hunting – a very normal thing for a nobleman which required no explanation in the courtly world. But things are different in the city. Nature is no longer a challenging wilderness which knights should combat to their hearts' content. It acquires more functions. Besides being a dangerous playground of the devil, who enjoys making weak people stumble and fall, nature is also a kind of pharmacy of consolation which can provide delight and even healing to desperate souls. This is why a middle-class audience expects a motive when someone – a knight or otherwise – sets out into nature. Accordingly, the prose version of 1516 adds that Duke Otto was melancholy and therefore sought comfort in hunting.⁷

These simple changes are very telling. Repeatedly they reveal that literature and art have once again been made useful. At the same time they identify controversial issues in urban public opinion, especially when, as in this case, we have information about the success of such a work. What becomes clear is that courtly culture provided most of the models for behaviour worthy of emulation; thanks to a simple rhetorical device, a knight could, in fact, be perceived as an inspiring entrepreneur. The merchant adventurer setting out into the world liked to see himself as an enterprising knight. This process of adaptation and annexation begins already in the fourteenth century, when a first cultural offensive offers the urban population new possibilities for social differentiation, now that there is a strong central administration within the city walls which is solely responsible for maintaining order. And the well-to-do middle class eagerly makes use of literature to bring about such differentiation.⁸

An early example of this can be found in the so-called *abele spelen*,⁹ four theatrical works which constitute the oldest known form of serious secular drama in medieval Europe. These plays, together with six farces, are included in a manuscript which must have been produced in Brussels; the large number of texts comprising this manuscript were intended for use in the city. The connection between the farces and the *abele spelen* is much closer than scholars have always assumed. All of the plays focus on the ambitions of the rising urban elite. The farces do so by creating a ridiculous counter-image of middle-class ideals and projecting it onto caricatures of peasants and rural immigrants living in the city. Their gestures are wild, their habits filthy and disgusting, they have no inhibitions and

live in a completely open world which lacks all sense of privacy. This theme of a topsy-turvy world can also be found in paintings and prints of a century later with their so-called realistic portrayal of peasants. The *abele spelen* serve the same interests, but three of the four project these interests directly onto the ideals of a fantasized world of chivalry. The fourth differs in its choice of story material, taking the ritualized dispute between summer and winter from peasant folklore; but here, too, the material is used for middle-class purposes.¹⁰

The lives of the knights and ladies in these plays are dominated by concerns of an urban nature. These are primarily related to (supposed) social inequality or religious differences which form nearly insurmountable obstacles to true love, the basis for starting family life. It is precisely on these points that the city envisions a more practical approach: as few impediments as possible should be placed in the way of social mobility which is open to those possessing youth, capability and the willingness to work hard. Thus the play *Lanseloet van Denemarken* (*Lanseloet of Denmark*) could have functioned as a handbook for making the right marriage in leading middle-class circles, with special attention given to possible problems of social class. The gist is that in principle everything is possible within the framework of the new marriage morals observed in the city.

Lanseloet (who should not be confused with Lancelot) fails to meet this requirement when he falls in love with a girl from a lower social rank. He follows the advice of his evil mother simply to rape her once and then to abandon her, but by doing so he becomes more desperately unhappy than he was before. The girl flees into the forest, deeply shocked by the violent loss of her virginity. Then a second knight appears on the stage. He represents the new world envisioned by the middle class and as a result cuts a remarkable figure in these courtly surroundings. Before he catches sight of the girl he gives the audience a glimpse of his ideas about work and investment. Duke Otto from the prose *Limborch* comes to mind here when the knight tells why he is wandering in the forest. He has been out hunting for four days but has not caught so much as a rabbit:

Ic scaem's mi in der herten mijn,
Dat minen aerbeit dus blijft verloren.

(I am deeply ashamed that my efforts are for nothing.)

The remarkable thing is not only that his enterprise in the woods is profit-motivated – he is not simply out hunting – but that he also expresses this fact in merchant language. His investment of time has not yet paid off, which means that his work or efforts (*'aerbeit'*) have so far been in vain.

But then he sees the girl weeping at a fountain. And he exclaims with great enthusiasm that his hunt still may prove successful:

Ay God, hoe mochtic die ghevaen,
Soe en ware minen aerbeit niet verloren!

(Oh God, if I could just catch her, my efforts would not be in vain.)

This knight, who later proves to be a very sympathetic character, does not react by asking 'Can I help you' or 'Why are you crying' or 'Where is the brute who mistreated you?' No, he smells profit in the form of this final reward for all his investment of time and effort. Once this attitude has been made clear to the audience, he comforts the girl and asks her to marry him. Significantly, he does this by using language reminiscent of a legal contract, which for him and the people of his time was the most obvious way to crown any human relationship. This also explains why he refers to the girl as an article of trade, saying that as a wife she would be more valuable than a wild boar, even one made of solid gold. And he promises her riches in his splendid castle in exchange for bodily pleasures. The fact that she has lost her virginity – an insurmountable problem for continuing her career in a courtly milieu – is for him no problem at all. Our knight has an extremely practical bent. He finds himself with a woman on his hands, she is beautiful, so why should he worry about a slight stain on her reputation?

The girl now starts talking in business terms herself. She turns her lost virginity into a selling-point by comparing herself to a richly blossoming tree from which a falcon has stolen one flower:

Soudi den boem daer omme haten
ende te copene daer omme laten?

(Would you for that reason hate the tree, and refuse to buy it?)

This knight and lady are led by principles other than the familiar honour codes of courtly culture, and their attention is focussed on a new set of issues. Central now is the concern that advantageous marriages, motivated by love, be founded on sound practical

considerations. And this includes a careful calculation of investment, work and profit.¹¹

Concentrating solely on this type of ideological and substantive adaptation from the traditionally higher social milieu may obscure the fact that urban literature draws to a much greater extent on popular culture. There are, of course, not nearly as many sources available to document and analyse this upward cultural movement. And those that do exist are considerably more difficult to interpret because the material, unlike that of courtly culture, is hardly ever available in its original form. But on the other hand, we know for sure that most city-dwellers came directly or indirectly from the country, that the movement to the city continued until after the Middle Ages, and that crop- and cattle-farming flourished inside the walls of all cities, despite limitations of space. The city, in other words, is located in the heart of the countryside.

Especially at the neighbourhood level, immigrants manage to keep their culture alive for two or three generations, and only gradually does it fall into step with more general urban interests. The essence of certain forms and rituals is often maintained, while they acquire an urban focus and aim. This can be observed most clearly in the youthful entertainment associated with *charivari*. In the countryside young men administered a kind of alternative justice in the name of their forefathers and with the approval of the community. In the city their activities are limited to public jeering and demands for money directed at persons who have transgressed the urban code of marriage; gradually these activities merge with more general carnival festivities. Also, in many cities the local governments grant official status to these groups, originally wild bands of unsettled young men, making them recognized neighbourhood organizations and later even chambers of rhetoric.¹²

But their original rituals – and those generally related to fertility rites of the countryside – are still clearly recognizable in the extant repertoire of their celebrations of reversal, in which temporary chaos (the topsy-turvy world) is created in order to demonstrate how real life should be conducted. Texts of this kind have been preserved in manuscripts and early printed books. They show how people in the city also tried, for the duration of the festivities, to exorcise their ever-present anxieties relating to hunger, sex, cold and the devil by enacting all sorts of scabrous jokes and nonsense. Texts like these

also heap ironic praise on the most extreme forms of loose living so that the ordinary citizen could infer what was expected of him or her under normal circumstances: hard work, thrift, moderation, self-reliance. The best-known text of this kind is that describing *The Guild of the Blue Boat*, which contains the mock statutes of an organization in charge of carnival festivities in various cities. Hieronymus Bosch and Sebastian Brant drew heavily on accounts like these for their moralizing portrayals of fools.¹³

Painters like Bosch and writers like Brant were exposed to these texts and the accompanying carnival festivities in the milieu of the established middle class, which had unabashedly plundered the folk culture it found right next door and tailored it to suit to their own needs. Although this cultural process is for the most part undocumented, its main points can nevertheless be reconstructed from the material preserved. In Middle Dutch literature there are, for example, three versions of the story about the Land of Cockaigne. The common core consists of compensatory fantasies of overeating and laziness in a worldly kind of paradise. Easily detectable here is the origin in rural life, which ever since the early Middle Ages had been scarred by heavy toil and devastating famines. The similarities with motifs from the most far-flung fairy tales and myths are also revealing. The standard ingredients include animals that present themselves in roasted or cooked form (so that all one has to do is to open one's mouth and take a bite), absolute idleness and edible architecture, houses, walls, etc., made of luxury food items.

This material now proves useful for other milieus as well, once the alterations dictated by the anxieties prevalent there, the fantasies desired and the interests to be propagated have been made. In the urban setting Cockaigne is remodelled into the more familiar topsyturvy world, which was also put to use as an ironic manifesto of middle-class morality. Cockaigne, in other words, was exploited for moralizing purposes. The two oldest texts, distantly related to a French *fabliau* from the thirteenth century, add a new dimension of applicability to the compensatory fantasy of gorging oneself. Now it also becomes a vivid warning against the sin of gluttony, since the behaviour in this impossible world turns out to be the exact opposite of that which moral tracts and sermons prescribe in the way of moderation and self-control.

Very revealing, for example, is the fact that the tables in Cockaigne are always set and heaped with food so that people can

indulge at any moment. Catalogues of sins and confession books make it absolutely clear, however, that one of the symptoms of the cardinal sin of gluttony is wanting to eat whenever one happens to feel like it. The sin of sloth undergoes a similar reversal. When the people in Cockaigne are said to earn money even while sleeping, this is not only proof of their laziness but also a critical allusion to a current type of usury from which the urban work ethic wished to distance itself.

Finally, there is reason to suspect that these texts present Cockaigne as tainted with heresy, since the ruler of the country is identified as the Holy Spirit. His name was also traditionally associated with the biblical description of the Thousand-Year Reign of prosperity and abundance, which all through the Middle Ages led to chiliastic expectations of an imminent utopia. As often as not, these expectations and the practices they inspired prompted accusations of heresy.

This moralizing trend, with its ironic treatment of the topsy-turvy world, is even more pronounced in *Van 't Luye-Lecker-Lant* (*The Land of Cockaigne*) of 1546, a version freely adapted from a text by Hans Sachs. Here this alternative country is presented in straightforward fashion as a cautionary tale for rebellious young people, who can learn from it how things should not be done! Laziness is given an exaggerated twist by an inverse ethic of competitive achievement, with the highest rewards going to those who evidence the greatest sluggishness. At shooting competitions the person who misses the target by the greatest distance wins first prize. The same is true of the runner who comes in last in a race. Grossly impolite behaviour, such as belching and breaking wind, is rewarded with money and even the highest government positions. Cockaigne is hell for hard-working and cultivated citizens who, the text informs us almost unnecessarily, are not even allowed into the country. Nor is there any need for them to go there. Only those young people may enter who do not yet know exactly how things are done in the civilized world of adults.¹⁴

It was in this way that a literature evolved in middle-class circles which, by means of annexation and adaptation, propagated a whole set of middle-class virtues considered essential for maintaining and extending the power which this class had acquired. The power was based on trade and industry and owed its momentum primarily to a

greatly increased striving for individualism, with its underlying assumption that one could take on the entire old world. Literature also eagerly offered its services in the formation of this mentality by portraying countless rogues and rascals, each of whom manages to get the best of traditional wielders of power and their rigid codes by a playful use of words and wits. These texts about Reynard the Fox, Uilenspiegel, Marcolph, the Pastor of Kalenberg, Aesop and a number of vagabonds such as the Arnout and Everaert brothers and the fictional François Villon have often been misunderstood. They were not in the first place intended as warnings about current types of swindle; rather they functioned as entertaining handbooks, enabling readers to behave in the same spirit. The special attraction was that the clever individual always seemed to succeed in unmasking kings, barons and bishops as arrogant and self-serving profiteers.¹⁵

But what exactly are these middle-class ideals? In this period they are always formulated in terms of the qualities that make for a good citizen and the goals he should pursue. Statements on these matters are found in sermons and tracts as well as in literature. A citizen had to be useful, practical-minded, industrious, eager to learn, thrifty, clever, individualistic, opportunistic, moderate, reasonable, modest and self-controlled. The term *burgerlijk* in Dutch, which brings together this whole assortment of characteristics, is today a more negative label for such virtues, carrying overtones of greed, frugality to the point of stinginess, pettiness, dulness and prudery. This reversal took place in the course of the eighteenth century when the lively, enterprising middle-class, which had by then been well established for centuries, evolved into a bourgeoisie which lived off their investments and, from their armchairs, held fast to the middle-class virtues as a means for maintaining and securing their personal prosperity. This shift obscured the memory of adventurous beginnings when the same virtues stood for challenging and daring innovation in a social structure which until then had seemed firmly fixed in the three functional estates.¹⁶

It is important now to realize that this set of virtues became the pre-eminent trademark of the middle-class mentality responsible for the amazing wealth of goods and culture in the Golden Age. But then we are talking about the seventeenth century in what was at the time the northern part of the Low Countries, the Republic which had separated itself from Spanish Habsburg control. Precisely

this multifaceted prosperity, together with the historiographical preference for sharp periodization and cyclical concepts of culture ('waning', 'renaissance') have given credence to the idea that this typically middle-class ethic was a product of Dutch soil, springing up in the course of the sixteenth century along with a growing desire for independence. This image was reinforced by the renowned sociologist Max Weber at the beginning of this century, when he identified a close tie between capitalism and the Reformation, both of which were undeniably pillars of the young Republic.¹⁷ But the virtues associated with capitalism and the Reformation were not new; considering that they had already been setting the tone for more than two centuries in Brabant and Flanders, they were at most revitalized and further developed. Utilitarianism and a practical approach had been extensively tested in the cities of the late Middle Ages and were then gratefully imported to the north, where middle-class culture would rise to its highest level.

Gradually it is becoming clear that the most essential characteristics of seventeenth-century culture and society have their roots in the late medieval city. This is true both of the remarkable 'revolution' which initiates the Eighty Years War and of the widely admired genre painting. The political separation can hardly be called a revolution, because precisely on the city level there was a desire to retain a medieval system of privileges and closed guilds, in opposition to the modern, centralizing policies of the Habsburg government. And the genre painting is inconceivable without the medieval tradition of greatly secularized portrayals of sins and vices, as promoted especially by the Franciscans in their sermons, *exempla* and even complete theatre productions, all of which enjoyed great popularity.¹⁸

But continuity – halting and stumbling though it may be, with all its variations in terms of different environments and social settings – can be found in all ages. It is therefore misleading to suppose that the middle-class virtues mentioned previously were 'invented' in the city. Individualism, hard work, making a career are not exclusively traits of urban society, even though they are often paraded as new in the late medieval cities themselves. A substantial number of the qualities derive from classical antiquity, many of them can be found at court, and nearly the entire list is already present in the earliest monastic environments. In every case we are confronted with

overlap, for the primary characteristic of this mentality is that it adapts to and combines with other attitudes. A rough sketch will show the classical authors presenting the dictate of reason and control of the emotions as guidelines for earthly life, together with instructions for the careful running of a household (*oeconomia*). The monastic orders could relate to the latter ideal with their emphasis on hard work, discipline and the related need for efficiency in measuring time. Also to be found in this milieu is the ideal of being a totally self-sufficient community. Finally, the individual adventurer who goes out to challenge the world and vie with fate (Fortuna) finds his first portrayal in the chivalric literature of courtly culture.¹⁹

The unique thing about the late medieval city, however, is that a highly original and adequate set of virtues was compiled from the classical, biblical and medieval traditions. It borrowed from folk cultures as well as from elite cultures, from old and new, continually in search of useful elements which could be adapted to reinforce, embody and foster the city's own interests and ambitions. And it can hardly be a coincidence that this passion for annexation and adaptation as a cultural principle among the middle classes directly corresponds to the very general reason for their existence as a social group: to take raw materials obtained or produced elsewhere, to manage any processing or refining of these materials that might be necessary, and finally to use them for purposes of trade. This type of behaviour is deeply rooted in survival strategies which will, if necessary, subordinate all values to the will to perpetuate one's existence, unaided but also unhindered by traditions, codes, inherited power or threats with material or spiritual weapons. It is in the literature of the late Middle Ages that this set of virtues is assembled, tested and propagated. One can hardly imagine better arguments for becoming acquainted with these works.

TRANSLATED BY MYRA SCHOLZ

NOTES

- 1 For example: J. W. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1955), final chapter. See also H. Pleij, 'The Function of Literature in Urban Societies in the later Middle Ages', *Dutch Crossing* 29 (1986), 3-22, here pp. 6-8, and 'Urban Elites in Search of a Culture: the Brussels Snow Festival of 1511', *New Literary History* 21 (1989-90), 637-8.

- 2 H. Pleij, 'De laat-middeleeuwse rederijkersliteratuur als vroeg-humanistische overtuigingskunst', *Jaarboek De Fontaine* 34 (1984), 65-95.
- 3 R. Meesters, ed., *Roman van Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1951), vol. II, lines 102-20; F. J. Schellart, ed., *Volksboek van Margarieta van Lymborch (1516)* (Antwerp: Wereldbibliotheek, 1952), p. 35.
- 4 *Van Floris ende Blancefleur* (Antwerp: G. van Parijs, 1576; ex: private collection), f. B2 recto. Cf. H. Pleij, 'Is de laat-middeleeuwse literatuur in de volkstaal vulgair?', in J. H. A. Fontijn, ed., *Populaire literatuur* (Amsterdam: Thespa, 1974), pp. 64-7.
- 5 Warsaw, Muzeum Narodowe. See *Anonieme Vlaamse primitieven. Zuid-nederlandse meesters met noodnamen van de 15de en het begin van de 16de eeuw*. Catalogus (Bruges: Lannoo, 1969), no. 47; J. Stengers, ed., *Bruxelles; croissance d'une capitale* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 1979), pp. 94-5.
- 6 F. C. Tubach. *Index Exemplorum: a Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki: Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969), no. 272. Cf. H. Pleij, 'Literatuur als medicijn in de late middeleeuwen', *Literatuur* 2 (1985), pp. 25-34, and also Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982).
- 7 F. Wolf, ed., *Huyge van Bourdeus* (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1860), p. 3; Schellart, ed., *Margarieta van Lymborch*, p. 3.
- 8 Pleij, 'The Function of Literature in Urban Societies'.
- 9 For a summary of the contents of the four plays, see the contribution by Hans van Dijk in this volume; for a brief discussion of the term *abele spelen*, the same, n. 1.
- 10 All texts are edited in P. Leendertz, ed., *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1899-1907). See also L. van Kammen, ed., *De abele spelen* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak en Van Gennep, 1968).
- 11 Van Kammen, ed., *Lanseloet*, pp. 178-84, lines 376-7, 388-9 and 501-2.
- 12 H. Pleij, 'Van keikoppen en droge jonkers; spotgezelschappen, wijkverenigingen en het jongerengericht in de literatuur en het culturele leven van de late middeleeuwen', *Volkskundig Bulletin* 15 (1989), 297-315.
- 13 H. Pleij, *Het Gilde van de Blauwe Schuit; literatuur, volksfeest en burgermoraal in de late middeleeuwen*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1983).
- 14 P. de Keyser, 'De nieuwe reis naar Luilekkerland', *Ars Folklorica Belgica* (Antwerp: Simons W.B.-fonds, 1956); D. C. Tinbergen, ed., *Des conincx summe* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1900), pp. 7-41; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (1957; rpt. London: Granada, 1984), pp. 283-4. See also H. Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511; literatuur en stadscultuur tussen middeleeuwen en moderne tijd* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1988), pp. 84-150, 323-5, and M. Bkahtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
- 15 H. Pleij, ed. and trans., *Van schelmen en schavuiten: laat-middeleeuwse vagebondteksten* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1985), pp. 106-25.

- 16 Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511*, pp. 321–56.
- 17 J. A. Aertsen, 'Burger en beroep in de middeleeuwen', *Economisch- en sociaal-historisch jaarboek* 41 (1978), 23–85; Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 1987), pp. 6–7.
- 18 J. Bruyn, *Een Gouden Eeuw als erfstuk*. Afscheidscollege (Amsterdam University Press, 1986); Pleij, 'Over de betekenis van middelnederlandse teksten', *Spektator* 10 (1980–1), 299–339.
- 19 P. Münch, *Ordnung, Fleiss und Sparsamkeit. Texte und Dokumente zur Entstehung der 'bürgerlichen Tugenden'* (Munich: DTV, 1984), pp. 22–3; J. Le Goff, 'The Town as an Agent of Civilization, c. 1200 – c. 1500', in C. M. Cipolla, ed., *The Fontana Economic History of Europe* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 71–106. Cf. also Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511*, pp. 328–36.

PART II

The world of chivalry

CHAPTER 5

Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances and the oral tradition of the 'chansons de geste'

Evert van den Berg and Bart Besamusca

In the period between 1280 and 1290, the Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant (commissioned by Count Florens V of Holland) produced a Middle Dutch translation of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* in rhyming couplets.¹ Although Maerlant generally followed his source quite closely, he did not hesitate to depart from the *Speculum* where he considered this necessary. He adds, for instance, several passages to the part that is devoted to the life and times of Charlemagne. For this study of Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances, one of these additions is of particular importance: the chapter in which Maerlant deals with professional storytellers.²

In this chapter, which is entitled 'tscelden jegen die borderers' (the scoffing at those who invent stories) and which consists of 82 lines, those who recite stories on Charlemagne are severely criticized. Maerlant reproaches them for telling lies, as they spoil the true stories with fancy words and melodious rhymes (lines 2–3: 'Die vraye ystorien vermorden / Met sconen rime, met scoenre tale'). Since the words sound pleasing and the subject is attractive, they claim their stories to be true (lines 3–6: 'Omdat die worde luden wale, / Entie materie es scone ende claer, / So doen sise verstaen vor waer'). Maerlant describes these storytellers as unreliable French poets, who rhyme at random, though with virtuosity. ('Die scone Walsche valsche poeten, / Die meer rimen dan si weten', lines 27–8). He also specifies the stories he has in mind. He mentions texts such as the *Fierabras*, *De vier Heemskinderen* (i.e. *Renaut de Montauban*), *Van den bere Wisselau* (*About the bear Wisselau*) and *Willem van Oringen* (i.e. *Moniage Guillaume*). Because Maerlant refers to these works by their Middle Dutch titles, and since no French source is known for *Van den bere Wisselau*, it can be inferred that he is aiming not only at the French, but also at the Middle Dutch versions of these works. According to Maerlant, all these stories are lies. The truth can be

found in the Latin works by Einhard, Sigebert of Gembloux and Turpin (the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*).

It will be clear that Maerlant is contrasting two Charlemagne traditions here.³ Being a learned cleric, he considers himself a representative of the scholarly tradition, which argues in favour of a historically reliable approach. The 'menestrele' (minstrels; line 80), on the other hand, represent the literary tradition, which he rejects. It can certainly be deduced from his scoffing at these storytellers that the *chansons de geste* enjoyed considerable popularity in Maerlant's days. Unfortunately, Maerlant is less explicit about where he has gathered his information on these stories. Is his knowledge founded on recitation, as J. D. Janssens assumes?⁴

This assumption is supported by Jean Rychner's well-known and often endorsed characterization of the Charlemagne stories: 'la chanson de geste est appliquée au chant public par un jongleur'.⁵ Lines 41-4 of Maerlant's tirade, however, might point to a dissemination of the stories that was not exclusively oral. After all, in that passage, the Flemish poet curses 'some Walsche boeke' (line 41: certain French books), which 'van Willemme van Oringen / Grote sterke ystorien singen' (lines 43-4: render long and impressive accounts of Willem van Oringen (Guillaume d'Orange)).

Maerlant's reference to books about Guillaume d'Orange indicates that we should take into account a manuscript transmission of the *chansons de geste*, which were written down from the end of the twelfth century onwards.⁶ Madeleine Tyssens' view is in line with this assumption. She rules out both oral composition and oral transmission with respect to the cyclic tradition of the *chansons de geste* about Guillaume d'Orange.⁷ In her opinion, the *chansons de geste* were disseminated primarily in written form.⁸ This, however, does not make an oral tradition of these stories any less likely. We may assume that written versions of the *chansons de geste* coexisted with oral versions.⁹ Stories about Charlemagne, composed both orally and in writing, were, like virtually all medieval 'literary' texts, made to be recited and heard. Paul Zumthor put it as follows, several years ago:

I admit here that, apart from some exceptions, every medieval 'literary' text, whatever its mode of composition and transmission, was designed to be communicated aloud to the individuals who constituted its audience . . . The question of 'orality' in the *chansons de geste* or in any other poetic genre can therefore be raised only in terms of *performance*, not of origin. At least we

may suppose that performance – which gives due recognition to the qualities of the human voice – represented the general rule.¹⁰

The stories which only circulated in oral form were recreated over and over again during recitations, on the basis of lexical formulas and stock themes. As a result, substantially different versions of one and the same story could develop. Owing to the influence of the oral presentations, the texts composed in writing also contain oral characteristics: after all, they have been composed for recitation.¹¹

All this applies mainly to the Old French tradition. In what follows, we will focus on the Middle Dutch tradition: we will relate several Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances to the written and oral dissemination of the *chansons de geste*. These Charlemagne romances from the Low Countries differ essentially in form from the Old French texts. As is well known, the *chansons de geste* were composed in *laisses*, which are made up of a varying number of lines with the same rhyme. These stanzas seem to comply eminently with the requirements of oral transmission.¹² The Middle Dutch texts, on the other hand, were written in rhyming couplets (in which the length of the lines may vary) and without a division into stanzas. The reason for this difference seems to lie in the German tradition to which Middle Dutch epic poetry belongs.¹³ Yet the style of these texts suggests a close relationship with oral tradition. In connection with this, we will first discuss the history of the so-called *brisure du couplet*, the phenomenon in which the syntactic unit started in the second line of a couplet breaks through the boundaries of that couplet and is continued in the first line of the next; after this we will discuss a type of formulaic language.

When in the ninth century alliteration falls into disuse in Old High German literature, the unity of versification becomes the so-called *binnengereimte Langzeile*. This is a long verse, consisting of two half lines which are connected by end rhyme, and which generally form a syntactic unity. Poems composed in this type of verse are mostly stanzaic in structure. The stanzas usually consist of two or three long lines.¹⁴ Texts structured in this way are very suitable for memorizing and reciting because of their transparency: they are composed of neatly arranged self-contained blocks of text. It is no coincidence, therefore, that this versification technique disappears in the twelfth century, when epic poetry begins to be

written down.¹⁵ The strophic structure was then abandoned and the *brisure du couplet* was further developed: the sentences break through the boundaries of the couplet, which ceases to be self-contained; as a result of this a poetic technique could come into being in which one sentence could take up a large number of lines, in certain texts often more than ten.

Incidentally, in earlier poetry written in couplets it is not exclusively a High German feature for the couplet to be self-contained. The same phenomenon is encountered in Old French poetry, and there too the *brisure du couplet* was carried through in the twelfth century.¹⁶ However, on the basis of chronology Maurer argues convincingly that the Middle High German development must have been indigenous and was not borrowed from Old French tradition. Both developments take place at approximately the same time, around 1150.¹⁷

It is a plausible hypothesis that Old Dutch literature which was composed before 1170 (and of which no written text has survived) can be linked up with Old High German literature as far as the form is concerned, since the regions in question formed a linguistic and cultural continuum and since, in addition, the Low Countries, with the exception of the larger part of Flanders, were part of the German Empire. Indeed, it is not surprising that in the earliest Middle Dutch texts, particularly in the Charlemagne romances (the Limburg *Aiol*, *Renout van Montalbaen*, *Roelantslied* and possibly *Willem van Oringen*), which were presumably created long before the middle of the thirteenth century, the *brisure du couplet* occurs only on a small scale.¹⁸ As a result of this, these works often seem to be structured in stanzaic groups of (long) lines; a structure which makes for easy recitation by a performer. This suggests that these works were still close to purely oral tradition, in which stories were disseminated (and composed?) orally.

A second indication that the Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances have their origin in oral tradition seems to be the relatively frequent use of the so-called characterizing epithets in these texts. In many of the thirteenth-century Charlemagne romances the number of lines with stock phrases such as 'Olivier die ridder fiere' (Oliver, the fierce knight), 'die ridder Olivier' (Oliver the knight) and 'die wijse Olivier' (wise Oliver) is at least twice as high as in the Arthurian romances and the romances of antiquity of the same period.¹⁹

The occurrence of formulaic language does not imply, however, that the works in question were originally oral. This type of language can also be found in the *Roelantslied*, for instance, which has a written origin (compare below). Still, we may assume that the contemporary audience associated this formulaic language with the older, oral tradition. In this context the opinion of Bäuml is worth mentioning. He argues that the so-called heroic epics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were received as comments on the old heroic epics, and that their pseudo-oral-formulaic use of the language played a part in that reception.²⁰

When we concentrate on the nature of the Old French sources to which poets of Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances had access, we can determine that some of these romances are linked to the *chansons de geste* by a written tradition. The *Roelantslied*, for example, which was presumably composed in the twelfth century,²¹ is demonstrably dependent on a written version of the *Chanson de Roland*. In illustration of this textual relationship between original and translation, we will cite lines 1662–8 of the *Roelantslied*.²² Roland is looking for Oliver. Under a wild rose bush

Want hij ligende oliuier
Hij nampen inden aermen sijn
Ende drochen voer tulpiin
In enen scilde dat hiten leijde
Voer dien busscop op die heijde
Die busscop sengense al gader
Ende beualse den hemelscen wader (1662–8)

(he saw Oliver lying. He took him in his arms and carried him before Bishop Turpin. He laid him on a shield in front of the bishop in the field. The bishop blessed them and commended them to the Heavenly Father.)

This passage corresponds with lines 2201–5 of the *Chanson de Roland*.²³ After line 2200, 'Rollant s'en turnet, le camp vait recercer', the text goes on as follows:

Sun cumpaignun ad truvé, Oliver.
Cuntre sun piz estreit l'ad enbracét,
Si cum il poet a l'arcevesque en vent,
Sur un escut l'ad as altres culchét,
E l'arcevesque l'ad asols e seignét. (2201–5)

(Then at last he finds Oliver, his friend. He clasps him to his bosom; as best he can he goes [with him] to the archbishop. He laid him down on a shield beside the others and the archbishop absolved and blessed him.)

Clearly the similarities between these two passages are striking. Since the *Roelantslied* contains many lines which, as in the example, are closely related to the Old French text, it is extremely unlikely that the original was an oral version of the *Chanson de Roland*. Besides this, in the Middle Dutch text one frequently finds initials where, in the corresponding place in the Old French, a new *laisse* begins.²⁴ The similarities in detail, then, show that the Middle Dutch poet translated from a manuscript and, indeed, he refers to this written source at least once with the word 'scriftuere' (line 1149; manuscript).

As a second example of a Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance which is based on a written Old French source, we will discuss the so-called Limburg *Aiol*. The poet of this text, which was presumably written around 1200,²⁵ generally follows his Old French model, the *Chanson d'Aiol*, quite closely. The structure of his original is preserved in his translation, as appears from his use of initials, for their positions correspond with the beginnings of the Old French *laissez*.²⁶ To illustrate his translation technique we may quote lines 430–5, in which Elie, Aiol's father, requests a quintain from the king, so that Elie can put his strength to the test:²⁷

Ic [dar] ú bidden eine sake
 Eine quintaine laet mi maken
 Ic wille prûuen wie ic mûge
 Of ic ten wapenen noch dûge
 Die coninc seide swager mijn
 Dat [g]i gebietet dat mût sijn (430–5)

(My request to you is the following: have a quintain made for me. I want to test my strength to see if I can still wield the weapons. The king said: 'Brother-in-law, as you wish, so it shall be done'.)

This passage is the translation of lines 8638–43 of the *Chanson d'Aiol*, except that the phrase 'swager mijn' (my brother-in-law) in line 434 was borrowed from line 8635, 'Biaus serouge':²⁸

'Je vous pri et requier por sainte carité
 Que vous une quintaine faites drechier es prés,
 Si i ferai .I. caup por mon cors esprover,
 Savoir se mès poroie mes garnimens porter
 Ne en ruiste bataille chevalier encontrer'.
 'Sire', che dist li rois, 'si com vous commandés'. (8638–43)

It can be inferred from this example that in the case of the Limburg *Aiol*, its strong similarities to the Old French text once again rule out the possibility of the original's being oral.

If we may go by the judgement of J. B. van der Have, the author of the Middle Dutch *Roman der Lorreinen* also seems to have had his original at his disposal in the form of a manuscript. According to Van der Have, the first part of the Middle Dutch text is a translation dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, based on a manuscript containing two texts from the *Cycle des Loherains*: *Garin le Loherain* and *Gerbert de Mez*. Between 1275 and 1300, this translation was furnished with a continuation which was not based on an Old French source.²⁹

For the record, it must be emphasized here that a written source by no means implies a faithful translation. On the contrary, it is impossible to point out any Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance which is a more or less literal translation of a *chanson de geste* throughout. The degree to which they deviate ranges from differences in detail, as in the Limburg *Aiol* and the *Roelantslied*, to a complete retelling, in which the poets adopted a very free attitude towards their originals. In illustration of the creativity of the translators we will look at the so-called Flemish *Aiol*, which was probably written in the first half of the thirteenth century.³⁰ This text, which is based on a written source,³¹ contains a beautiful passage in which we are told how God prevents the traitor Macaire from drowning Aiol's children by sending an angel to the fisherman Thierry at night. The angel orders him to go fishing, which ensures his being there in time to save the children (lines 651–80).³² Although it is not impossible that this story is based on a lost version of the *Chanson d'Aiol*, it is more likely that the Middle Dutch poet added these lines to his translation in order to explain the sudden appearance of Thierry, precisely when Macaire is throwing Aiol's children into the river. (The Old French text explains his presence afterwards.³³)

The temptation to speculate briefly about the nature of the Old French manuscripts the Middle Dutch poets had at their disposal is too strong to resist. Did they mostly make use of manuscripts owned by professional storytellers? In some cases this question must be answered in the negative. The *Roman der Lorreinen*, for instance, is too long to have been disseminated through the so-called *manuscripts de jongleur*.³⁴ *Gheraert van Viane*, however, is a different case. The only remnants of this text (which was presumably based on an older version of the story, to which also the *Girart de Vienne* by Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube goes back³⁵) have survived in two double sheets of parchment, each page with one column, consisting of twenty-four lines per page. The fragments come from an extraordinarily small

manuscript: one page is about 15 centimetres (i.e. approximately 6 inches) high and about 10 cms (4 inches) wide.³⁶ It is certainly not impossible that this booklet was owned by a Dutch *jongleur*. It is quite conceivable such a professional performer owed his text to a French colleague. This possibility is supported by the Old French tradition: we know of a fragment of *Girart de Vienne* which Joseph Duggan rates among the 'jongleurs' manuscripts'.³⁷ Although this argumentation is based on probability and contains many uncertainties, it may well be that the poet of the *Gheraert van Viane* had an original in the form of an Old French jongleur manuscript.³⁸

Whereas the poets of the Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances mentioned above (with the possible exception of the poet of the *Gheraert van Viane*) made use of a written source, we also know texts where the possibility of oral transmission is more obvious. Such a manner of transmission might account for the enormous differences between some Middle Dutch texts and the Old French version(s) of the same story, where other explanations fail to do so. One could for example argue that in some cases the form dictated the deviations, as the Middle Dutch poets were supposedly confronted with a shortage of rhyme words when rendering the *laisses* into couplets. This assumption, however, is refuted by texts such as the *Roelantslied* and the Limburg *Aiol* (discussed above), which contain many passages translated literally. A second possible explanation is the hypothesis that the creativity of the Middle Dutch poets is responsible for the differences from the (written) Old French versions. One could argue against this that in the case of the adaptation of Arthurian romances and romances of antiquity, no matter how creative they are, a close connection with the Old French source remains visible. However, with the Charlemagne romances we are concentrating on here, it is a matter of retelling the stories, rather than of adapting them. Therefore, the possibility of oral transmission offers the most appealing explanation. W. P. Gerritsen formulated this as follows:

Je me demande si cet état des choses [viz. 'une transformation totale de l'œuvre'] ne pourrait pas s'expliquer par l'hypothèse que le remanieur n'a pas travaillé d'après une copie manuscrite de la chanson française, mais d'après ses souvenirs de la récitation par un jongleur français. Ce qu'il aurait retenu de cette audition, ce serait la trame de l'histoire, et, peut-être, certains passages ou quelques vers significatifs, qui lui étaient restés en mémoire. En se basant sur ces réminiscences, mais non sans y ajouter des éléments de sa propre invention ou empruntés à d'autres sources, il aurait

conçu une version moyen-néerlandaise qui peut être considérée comme une refonte complète de la chanson française.³⁹

(I wonder whether such a state of affairs [i.e. 'a total transformation of the work'] could not be explained by the hypothesis that the rewriter did not work on the basis of a manuscript copy of the French *chanson*, but on the basis of his recollection of the recitation by a French minstrel. What he would have recalled from such a performance would be the plot of the story and, possibly, some passages or significant verses he remembered. Basing himself on those recollections but not without adding elements of his own invention or borrowed from other sources, he would have invented a Middle Dutch version that can be considered a complete rewrite of the French *chanson*.)

Gerritsen arrived at this assumption on the basis of the Charlemagne romance *Ogier van Denemarken*. The *Ogier*, preserved in fragments, diverges markedly from the well-known Old French versions of *Ogier le Danois*.⁴⁰ With the discovery of new fragments of the *Ogier*, it has recently become possible to test the theory that establishes a link between the Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance and an oral version of the Old French story. The text of these fragments confirms the existing picture: there are very few similarities between the Middle Dutch and the Old French tradition. The poet of the *Ogier* may follow the main line of the story, but the more specific story elements which he includes in his text appear to be absent from the Old French versions. For instance, in the newly discovered fragments the story is set in the Orient, as is the case in other versions. However, the passages in which an account is given of Ogier's visit to the underground vaults in the palace of sultan Brohier to look at the candelabra and of a second visit during which he encounters a crippled dwarf, cannot be found elsewhere in the *Ogier*-tradition.⁴¹

A second Charlemagne romance which can be associated with the oral transmission of an Old French *chanson de geste*, is the *Madelgijs*. This story, preserved in fragments, was presumably composed around 1300.⁴² When this text is compared with the *Maugis d'Aigremont*, as was done by B. Duijvestijn, not only do the number of verbatim resemblances appear to be extraordinarily small, but above all, in the *Madelgijs*, which is known to us in its entirety in a complete German translation, the story has become twice as long. The Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance contains many episodes which cannot be found in the Old French version. In these passages, Madelgijs and his twin brother Vivien usually play the main part.

Together, they fight the heathens and Charlemagne. As can be inferred from these data, the Middle Dutch poet seems to have drawn on an oral delivery of the *chanson de geste* on Maugis d'Aigremont. Duijvestijn therefore supposes that the poet was familiar with the main story line, either from oral recitation or from someone who had heard the story once and retold it for him.⁴³

The poet of the *Renout van Montalbaen* (preserved in fragments and presumably written at the beginning of the thirteenth century⁴⁴) also seems to have based his story on an oral delivery of the *chanson de geste* about Renaud de Montauban. Irene Spijker has devoted an extremely thorough study to this Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance. The following exposition about the oral source of the *Renout van Montalbaen* is based on her work.⁴⁵

The relationship between the Middle Dutch text and the Old French *Renaud*-tradition appears to be fairly complex. In some parts, the *Renout van Montalbaen* closely matches the Old French text. In those passages, striking textual similarities as well as deviations from the Old French tradition can be found at the same time. In other parts of the Middle Dutch *Renout*, however, the link with the Old French original is not nearly as close. Certain episodes are undeniably inspired by the Old French version, but seem to have been thoroughly adapted. Other passages and smaller details are absolutely unique. Spijker correctly thinks that some of these differences seem to indicate that the Middle Dutch poet did not draw on a written source, for these deviations are puzzling if we assume that the poet had a manuscript in front of him. To illustrate this, we will discuss the passage in which Charlemagne organizes a horse race to find a suitable horse for Roland.⁴⁶

According to the French version of this passage to which the Middle Dutch corresponds most closely, Renaud and his companions, on their way to the horse race in Paris, arrive in Orléans. There they run into trouble: someone recognizes them and warns Charlemagne that they are coming. Consequently, they are halted several times and questioned, before they manage to enter Paris. Yet they are not recognized, since Maugis made Renaud and Bayard undergo a magical metamorphosis in the forest near Monthéry. In Paris, they find shelter with a shoemaker, who realizes he is accommodating Renaud when he sees how Maugis ties a thread to Bayard's leg to make the horse seem lame until the beginning of the race. The Middle Dutch version of this passage deviates remarkably

from the Old French text. In the Middle Dutch *Renout*, the travellers put up at the best inn in Orléans and it is there that Renout and Beyaert undergo their transformation. Then, amazingly enough after the change, they are recognized by a spy, who betrays them to Charlemagne. When Renout and his companions have arrived in Paris, they again put up at the best inn. Maugis ties a thread to Beyaert's leg *and* changes the animal into a scrawny nag. The innkeeper sees this and recognizes his guests.

It will be clear that these deviations from the Old French are virtually inexplicable when we assume that the Middle Dutch poet was adapting a written version of this passage. The differences, on the other hand, can be easily accounted for by the assumption that the poet was drawing on what he remembered from a recitation of the *Renaut*. The workings of memory may have caused the Middle Dutch poet, who unmistakably surveyed some parts of the French story of considerable length, to associate the recognition in Orléans with story elements which were connected to the recognition in Paris. As a result of this, the episode in Orléans bears some likeness to the scene at the inn in Paris. Thus, the first lodging scene is a doubling of the second, according to Spijker.

At first sight, the textual similarities mentioned before between the Middle Dutch and the Old French versions argue against the assumption that the poet of the *Renout* based himself on his recollections of a recitation of the Old French story. However, Spijker points out that these similarities can only be found in small snatches of text and that they are mainly found in three key passages of the story (the horse race, the Vaucouleurs episode and the imprisonment of Richard). She links this up convincingly with the recitation of the *Renaut*, which was too long to be recited in one session. Therefore there is reason to assume that integral parts of the story were extracted from the whole of the text and recited separately. Those very parts in which the Middle Dutch version shows textual similarities to the Old French one would suit such a purpose excellently, since they are self-contained. Moreover, it seems likely that the audience was enthralled by the story in the three parts in question. This suggests that the Middle Dutch poet had the chance to listen to these parts more than once, which occasionally enabled him to match the Old French phrasing. Considered in this way, the textual similarities certainly do not invalidate the assumption that the poet of the *Renout van Montalbaen* became familiar with the French text

through recitations.⁴⁷ On the basis of what he remembered of the performances, he wrote his *Renout*, allowing himself, in imitation of the oral narrative manner, a good deal of liberty with respect to the story.

With the discussion of the *Renout*, which has become the chief witness for the proposition that some Middle Dutch poets used an oral source for their translations of *chansons de geste*, we may conclude this contribution. Our aim has been to demonstrate that the Charlemagne romances from the Low Countries have much in common with the oral tradition of the *chansons de geste*. The style in which these Middle Dutch stories were written already suggests this connection, which is confirmed by research into the sources used by the Middle Dutch poets. After all, there are strong indications that some of them did not draw on a manuscript source. They worked from their memories, in which the recollections of a recitation were stored.

TRANSLATED BY MYRA VAN HOEK AND MARTINE DE DRAAIJER

NOTES

- 1 The research of the second author has been made possible by a fellowship of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. We would like to thank Frank Brandsma, Josephie Brefeld and Irene Spijker for their comments on the first draft of this article.
- 2 Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael*, ed. M. de Vries and E. Verwijs, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1863; rpt. Utrecht: HES, 1982), Part 4, Book 1, Chapter 29. This chapter is inserted between the translation of chapters 21 and 22 in Book xxiv of the *Speculum* (Douai edition); cf. Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum historiale* (rpt. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1965), p. 970.
- 3 See H. van Dijk, *Karel de Grote in epiek en kroniek* (Groningen: Universiteitsdrukkerij, 1988), p. 10.
- 4 J. D. Janssens, *Dichter en publiek in creatief samenspel. Over interpretatie van Middelnederlandse ridderromans*. Leuvense studiën en tekstuutgaven, Nieuwe Reeks 7 (Louvain and Amersfoort: Acco, 1988), pp. 50–2.
- 5 Cf. Jean Rychner, *La Chanson de geste. Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*. Société de Publications Romanes et Françaises LIII (Geneva: Droz; Lille: Giard, 1955), p. 10.
- 6 See J. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), pp. 613–14. Cf. also A. Adler, *Epische Spekulanten. Versuch einer synchronen Geschichte des*

- altfranzösischen Epos*. Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der schönen Künste (Munich: Fink, 1975), p. 16.
- 7 Madeleine Tyssens, *La Geste de Guillaume d'Orange dans les manuscrits cycliques*. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège CLXXVIII (Paris: Société d'Éditions 'Les Belles Lettres', 1967), esp. pp. 447-58.
 - 8 Cf. also Madeleine Tyssens, 'La tradition manuscrite et ses problèmes', in Juan Victorio and Jean-Charles Payen, eds., *L'Épopée*. Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental 49 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), pp. 229-50.
 - 9 Cf. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, pp. 614-15.
 - 10 Paul Zumthor, 'The Text and the Voice', *New Literary History* 16 (1984-85), 67-92 (quotation p. 67).
 - 11 Cf. for example Franz H. Bäuml, 'Medieval Texts and the Two Theories of Oral-Formulaic Composition: A Proposal for a Third Theory', *New Literary History* 16 (1984-85), 31-49. See also his 'The Oral Tradition and Middle High German Literature', *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986), 399-445. See also N. van den Boogaard, 'Le caractère oral de la chanson de geste tardive', *Rapports* 48 (1978), 61-74.
 - 12 Cf. Rychner, *La Chanson de geste*, pp. 68-125. See also Alan Hindley and Brian Levy, *The Old French Epic: an Introduction*. Ktemata 8 (Louvain: Peeters, 1983), p. x.
 - 13 See E. van den Berg, *Middel nederlandse versbouw en syntaxis. Ontwikkelingen in de versifikatie van verhalende poëzie ca. 1200 - ca. 1400* (Utrecht: HES, 1983), chapter 6.
 - 14 Cf. F. Maurer, 'Über Langzeilen und Langzeilenstrophen in der ältesten deutschen Dichtung', in U. Ernst and P.-E. Neuser, eds., *Die Genese der europäischen Endreimdichtung*. Wege der Forschung 444 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), pp. 34-65, and C. Minis, 'Zum Problem der frühmittelhochdeutschen Langzeilen', in *Die Genese*, 392-412. Cf. however W. Schröder, 'Zu alten und neuen Theorien einer altdeutschen "binnengereimten Langzeile"', *Die Genese*, 269-86. Schröder considers the concept 'binnengereimte Langzeile' impracticable. The phenomenon in which the couplet is the unity of thought, however, remains unchallenged. Also in early Middle English there are examples of the coalescence of rhyme pair and unit of information, as in *King Horn*. One of the three surviving manuscripts of this poem has even been written in long lines (London, British Library, MS Harley 2253); cf. Van den Berg, *Middel nederlandse versbouw*, p. 164.
 - 15 Cf. M. G. Scholz, *Hören und Lesen. Studien zur primären Rezeption der Literatur im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980).
 - 16 Cf. J. Frappier, 'La brisure du couplet dans Erec et Enide', *Romania* 86 (1965), 2-21. See for early Middle English C. (Van Dyke) Friedlander, 'Early Middle English Accentual Verse', *Modern Philology* 76 (1978-9), 219-30.

- 17 Cf. Maurer, 'Über Langzeilen', p. 59.
- 18 Cf. Van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw*, chapter 6.2.
- 19 Cf. E. van den Berg, 'Van wiganten, onvervaerde helden en fiere ridders: epithetische persoonsaanduidingen in de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek', *De nieuwe taalgids* 81 (1988), 97-110.
- 20 Bäuml, 'Medieval Texts and the Two Theories of Oral-Formulaic Composition', p. 44.
- 21 See Van Dijk, *Karel de Grote*, p. 6.
- 22 Quoted from H. van Dijk, ed., *Het Roelantslied. Studie over de Middelnederlandse vertaling van het 'Chanson de Roland', gevolgd door een diplomatische uitgave van de overgeleverde teksten*, 2 vols. (Utrecht: HES, 1981), vol. II, p. 395. We quote the lines without the underlining.
- 23 Cesare Segre, ed., *La Chanson de Roland*. Documenti di filologia 16 (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1971), pp. 416-17.
- 24 Cf. Van Dijk, *Het Roelantslied*, pp. 197-9.
- 25 Cf. Van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw*, chapter 6, and W. P. Gerritsen, 'Les relations littéraires entre la France et les Pays-Bas au Moyen Age. Quelques observations sur la technique des traducteurs', *Actes du septième congrès national de la Société Française de Littérature Comparée, Poitiers 27-29 mai 1965. Etudes de littérature étrangère et comparée* (Paris: Didier, 1967), pp. 28-46 (esp. p. 37).
- 26 We make use of an unpublished 'thèse du 3me cycle': Baukje Finet-van der Schaaf, 'Etude comparée d'"Aioli"', chanson de geste du XI^e siècle, et des fragments d'"Aioli" en moyen-néerlandais', 2 vols. (Université de Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV, 1987), vol. I, pp. 26-113.
- 27 M. Gysseling, ed., *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300)*, series 2, *Litteraire handschriften*, vol. I (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980), pp. 311-22.
- 28 Jacques Normand and Gaston Raynaud, eds., *Aiol. Chanson de geste*. Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris, 1877).
- 29 Cf. J. B. van der Have, *Roman der Lorreinen: de fragmenten en het geheel* (Schiedam: Scriptum, 1990).
- 30 Cf. Van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw*, chapter 6. According to Baukje Finet-van der Schaaf the text was probably written between 1238 and 1244 for Jeanne of Constantinople, countess of Flanders; cf. her 'Etude comparée d'"Aioli"', vol. I, pp. 311-17. See pp. 114-283 for a study of the translation technique.
- 31 Cf. Finet-van der Schaaf, 'Etude comparée d'"Aioli"', vol. I, pp. 248-50.
- 32 J. Verdam, ed., 'Nieuwe Aioli-fragmenten', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* 2 (1882), 209-25; rpt. in his *Oude en nieuwe fragmenten van den Middelnederlandschen Aioli* (Leiden: Brill, 1883), pp. 1-47.
- 33 Cf. also Gerritsen, 'Les relations', p. 37 (French translation of the passage: pp. 43-4). See, for a different opinion, W. P. Gerritsen, 'Vertalingen van Oudfranse litteraire werken in het Middelnederlands', in R. E. V. Stuip, ed., *Fransse literatuur van de Middeleeuwen*

- (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988), pp. 184–207 (esp. pp. 192–5).
- 34 Cf. Tyssens, 'La tradition manuscrite', pp. 234–5.
 - 35 Cf. Irene Spijker, 'Een poging tot lokalisering van de Middelnederlandse *Gheraert van Viane* in de internationale *Girart de Vienne*-traditie', *De nieuwe taalgids* 76 (1983), 97–108. Cf. also the different opinion of W. G. van Emden, 'Les Girart et leur(s) femme(s), et problèmes annexes. A propos de *Gheraert van Viane*', in L. M. Paterson and S. B. Gaunt, eds., *The Troubadours and the Epic. Essays in Memory of W. M. Hackett* (Warwick: Department of French, University of Warwick, 1987), pp. 238–69.
 - 36 Cf. Bart Besamusca, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse Karelepiek. Een beknopte beschrijving van de handschriftelijke en gedrukte overlevering* (Utrecht: HES, 1983), pp. 26–7. See also Hans Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek. Een codicologische beschrijving*, 2 vols. Deventer Studiën 9 (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 61–2.
 - 37 Cf. Joseph J. Duggan, 'The Manuscript Corpus of the Medieval Romance Epic', in Peter Noble, Lucie Polak and Claire Isoz, eds., *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic. Essays in Honour of David J. A. Ross* (New York: Kraus, 1982), pp. 29–42 (esp. p. 39, no. 18).
 - 38 According to Andrew Taylor, however, the distinction between minstrel manuscripts and library or commercial texts is meaningless; see his 'The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript', *Speculum* 66 (1991), 43–73.
 - 39 Cf. Gerritsen, 'Les relations', pp. 35–6; see also his 'Vertalingen', p. 186.
 - 40 Edited by H. van Dijk, 'Ogier van Denemarken. Diplomatische uitgave van de Middelnederlandse fragmenten en van de overeenkomstige passages in de Duitse vertaling', *De nieuwe taalgids* 67 (1974), 177–202.
 - 41 Cf. H. van Dijk and H. Kienhorst, 'Ogier van Denemarken. Nieuwe fragmenten', in G. R. W. Dibbets and P. W. M. Wackers, eds., *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W. M. H. Hummelen* (Wijhe: Quarto, 1989), pp. 3–24.
 - 42 Cf. Van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw*, chapter 6.
 - 43 Cf. B. W. Th. Duijvestijn, *Madelgijs. De Middelnederlandse fragmenten en de overeenkomstige Hoogduitse verzen*. Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, klasse der Letteren 51, no. 130 (Brussels: Brepols, 1989), pp. 31–5.
 - 44 Cf. Van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw*, chapter 6.
 - 45 Cf. Irene Spijker, *Aymijns kinderen hoog te paard. Een studie over 'Renout van Montalbaen' en de Franse 'Renaut'-traditie*. Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen xxii (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990), chapter 7.
 - 46 Cf. Spijker, *Aymijns kinderen*, pp. 213–15.
 - 47 Cf. Spijker, *Aymijns kinderen*, pp. 227–50.

CHAPTER 6

The prologue to 'Arturs doet', the Middle Dutch translation of 'La Mort le Roi Artu' in the 'Lancelot Compilation'

Bart Besamusca and Orlanda S. H. Lie

Around 1320 a codex was made in Brabant which centuries later would prove to be of extraordinary importance to the study of Middle Dutch Arthurian romances.¹ The collection of texts that has survived in this codex, at present preserved in the Royal Library of The Hague (MS 129 A 10), is better known as the *Lancelot Compilation*.² The compiler of this codex has brought together no fewer than ten Middle Dutch Arthurian romances into an ordered sequence. This new compositional form, characterized by the arrangement of different romances into one comprehensive structure, probably marks a specific stage in the evolution of Arthurian literature. After all, the development of Arthurian romances into *summae* of Arthurian material is also attested by other European literatures. The *Lancelot Compilation* as a cycle of Arthurian romances is, for example, to a large extent comparable with the collection of Arthurian material preserved in MS fonds français 112 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. This compilation, which dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century, includes almost all important Old French Arthurian prose romances, such as the *Lancelot en prose* and the *Tristan en prose*.³

The core of the *Lancelot Compilation* consists of a metrical translation of the *Lancelot en prose*, *La Queste del Saint Graal* and *La Mort le Roi Artu*. The translation of the *Lancelot en prose* is incomplete: only the last part of the romance, corresponding with the concluding episode of the *Lancelot en prose*, known as 'La Préparation à la Queste', has survived. The translations of the *Queste del Saint Graal* and the *Mort le Roi Artu*, on the other hand, are complete. To this core, the compiler, who has been identified in recent research as the principal scribe of the manuscript,⁴ has added seven metrical Arthurian romances. Two of these romances are inserted between

the *Lancelot en prose* and the *Queste* and the remaining five are added between the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu*.⁵ Aside from connecting these different romances by transitional formulas, the compiler also used an intricate system of cross-references to establish a link between the various texts. In addition, it has been observed that the compiler employed the narrative technique of interlace (*entrelacement*) to interweave the narrative threads of most romances. In this way a cycle originated which is characterized by a highly intricate narrative structure and which has already intrigued several generations of Dutch scholars.⁶

Apart from its undisputed value as the single most important source of Middle Dutch Arthurian literature (the greater part of the extant corpus is to be found in this compilation), this unique codex also testifies to the activities of a so-called 'corrector'. According to recent research, the corrector was active while the codex was being produced.⁷ He corrected the work of the scribes and left his marks on a substantial portion of the text. A close study of the interlinear and marginal corrections present in the codex shows not only that the corrector wanted to impart a more Brabantine dialectal flavour to an originally Flemish text but, more importantly, that he was intent upon preparing the text for oral delivery.⁸

The unusual features of the *Lancelot Compilation* discussed so far concern the collection of Arthurian texts as a whole. This certainly does not imply that the individual romances have no remarkable traits of their own. On the contrary, almost every romance proves to be a fascinating object of investigation. The romance of *Moriaen*, inserted by the compiler just before the translation of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, may serve as an example. An analysis of this romance has disclosed that the version of the *Moriaen* in the *Lancelot Compilation* differs significantly from an earlier thirteenth-century Middle Dutch version. While, for example, the title hero in the version of the *Lancelot Compilation* is searching for his father Perceval, the thirteenth-century *Moriaen* seems to be looking for his father Aglaval.⁹

Another romance in the *Lancelot Compilation* with intriguing elements is *Arturs doet*, the Middle Dutch translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu*. A comparison between the Middle Dutch text and the Old French manuscript tradition of *La Mort le Roi Artu* reveals two distinctive features of the Middle Dutch romance that are not paralleled by any French reading. In the first place the compiler replaced the episode of Arthur's war against the Romans attested by

the French *Mort Artu* in *Arturs doet* by the Middle Dutch version of this event found in Jacob van Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael*, a thirteenth-century translation of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*.¹⁰ Aside from this interpolation, *Arturs doet* reveals a second original contribution: the incorporation of a religious treatise of 296 verses which is placed at the beginning of the romance, before the actual translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu*. The first and only editor of the complete *Lancelot Compilation*, W. J. A. Jonckbloet, provided a name for this treatise by adding the heading 'Prologhe' to these verses.¹¹ The purpose of this article is to take a new look at this prologue to *Arturs doet*. What is its content and why was it added to the Middle Dutch translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu* in the *Lancelot Compilation*?

A first attempt at analysing the prologue to *Artus doet* was undertaken in 1980 by a group of students and their teacher at the Dutch Department of the University of Groningen.¹² Their purpose in studying the prologue was to determine whether there was a thematic link between prologue and romance. By interpreting the prologue as a prayer of God-seeking man, the authors arrived at the conclusion that on a more abstract level the prologue is about the development of man in search of God. In their opinion the theme of the prologue provides a key to the interpretation of *Arturs doet*. By tracing the development of the three protagonists in the romance (Lancelot, Walewein (i.e. Gawain) and Arthur) in the light of the theme of the prologue, the authors come to the conclusion that the function of the prologue is not only to deepen the public's understanding of these characters, but also to invite it to reflect on its own place in this world.

The study of the medieval prologue as an important key to the understanding of medieval literature was recently given new impetus by an impressive work of the German medievalist Walter Haug. His *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter* is based on a careful analysis of Middle High German texts which contain explicit references to the poetics of medieval authors.¹³ In this study, the prologue in medieval works is assigned a crucial role. Rather than viewing the medieval prologue as an autonomous rhetorical device, Haug interprets the prologue as a poetological statement of the author which should be interpreted within a literary-historical context.¹⁴

The present analysis of the prologue to *Arturs doet* also proceeds on the assumption that the prologue is inextricably linked to the text. Since there are clear references in the prologue to the literary activities of the author – he begs forgiveness both for his worldly and literary (i.e. written) sins and he concludes his introduction by announcing that he will proceed with his story¹⁵ – it seems rather obvious that the author of the prologue must also be the Middle Dutch translator of the *Mort le Roi Artu*. However, before this conclusion can be reached, the complexity of the codex in which the prologue has survived, makes it necessary to examine the question of the authorship of the prologue from more than one angle.

There is a second possibility. In the light of the activities of the compiler, who proved to be capable of more than the mere compiling of Arthurian romances, one should reckon with the distinct possibility that he was responsible for the prologue. In addition, the *Lancelot Compilation* codex itself suggests the name of a third candidate as the possible author of the prologue: Lodewijc van Velthem. After all, according to the *ex libris* on the last leaf of the codex he was the owner of the manuscript: 'Hier indet boec van lancelote dat heren lodewijcs es van velthem' (Here ends the book of Lancelot that belongs to *heer* [i.e. a priest or cleric] Lodewijc van Velthem).

The likelihood that the second candidate, the compiler, was the author of the prologue is based on his activities as editor of numerous romances that he prepared for incorporation into the codex. A number of romances were altered drastically, such as the romance of *Moriaen* discussed above. Sometimes his interference with the text is restricted to cutting down the length of a romance, as with the *Ridder metter mouwen*, but there are also romances where the compiler extended the original text with new episodes. In these instances, for example in the *Perchevael* and the *Wrake van Ragisel*, we can witness the compiler at work as an original poet.¹⁶ The above observations suggest that the compiler may very well have been the author of the prologue to *Arturs doet*.

The name of the third candidate, Lodewijc van Velthem, is not only known from the *ex libris* in the *Lancelot Compilation*, but also happens to be the name of a Middle Dutch poet whose literary activities date from the first decades of the fourteenth century. The poet Lodewijc van Velthem wrote a sequel to Jacob van Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael* (1315–16) and he is also the author of a translation of

the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*, completed in 1326. Judging from his literary *œuvre*, this Lodewijc van Velthem was very interested in the Arthurian matter. His identification as the owner of the *Lancelot Compilation*, therefore, remains undisputed. This conclusion implies that Lodewijc van Velthem could also be the author of the prologue to *Arturs doet*.

While the authors of the previously mentioned study of *Arturs doet* simply took it for granted that the prologue was the work of the compiler of the *Lancelot Compilation*,¹⁷ our approach to the question of authorship is based on poetic and linguistic arguments.¹⁸ There are strong indications that neither Lodewijc van Velthem, nor the compiler qualify as the author of the prologue, and that we must look to the poet of *Arturs doet*, the Middle Dutch translator of *La Mort le Roi Artu*, as its maker. To begin with, the rhyming technique of the prologue agrees with the technique used in the romance: in both cases an average grammatical sentence comprises more than two and a half lines, while there are many instances where the end of a line does not coincide with the end of a syntactical unit. The compiler, on the other hand, uses on average two lines for a grammatical sentence, and the structure of his sentences agrees very often with the structure of his lines.¹⁹ Secondly, the rhyming technique of the prologue-writer differs strongly from that of Lodewijc van Velthem. The prologue lacks both the stopgap lines inserted for the sake of rhyme and the stock assertions which are frequently observed in the works of Lodewijc van Velthem.²⁰ Thirdly, the language of the prologue conveys the impression of a more western (Flemish) dialect than the dialect used by the compiler and Lodewijc van Velthem, which has the characteristics of a more eastern region (Brabant). The dialect which marks the translation of *Arturs doet* is also western: its author was probably a Fleming, and the excessively Flemish peculiarities of his translation prompted the Brabantine corrector to change them.²¹ All the above arguments support the hypothesis that the prologue to *Arturs doet* and the Middle Dutch translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu* are by one and the same Flemish author.

The Flemish origin of the poet of *Arturs doet* is an intriguing element in the literary-historical context of the Middle Dutch translations of the Old French prose *Lancelot*. As it turned out, not only *Arturs doet* but also the other two translations of the *Lancelot* trilogy in

the *Lancelot Compilation*, namely the *Lancelot en prose* and the *Queste del Saint Graal*, betray a Flemish origin.²² Whereas it is plausible that the Middle Dutch translation of the *Lancelot-Queste-Mort Artu* is the work of one single Flemish author, a second Middle Dutch verse translation of the *Lancelot en prose*, the so-called *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* (*Lancelot of the Cave*), which has also been identified as a Flemish product, must definitely be attributed to a different Flemish poet.²³ A remarkable feature of the latter romance is its underlying adaptation technique. Instead of adopting the new aesthetics of his prose model, the Middle Dutch poet casts his translation into the more conservative style of the 'classical' Arthurian romances, exemplified by Chrétien de Troyes and his followers.²⁴ *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* probably dates from around 1250. It is conceivable that this translation was followed (in about 1280) by the Flemish translation of the *Lancelot-Queste-Mort Artu* that was incorporated in about 1320 into the Brabantine codex of the *Lancelot Compilation*.²⁵ Although this translation proves to be a faithful rendition of the French romances, like *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, it did not adopt the prose form of its exemplar.²⁶ The existence of yet a third Flemish translation is attested by the colophon of a fifteenth-century German *Lancelot* translation:²⁷

Diss buchelin zu einer stonden
Hain ich inn flemische geschrieven fonden,
Von eyne kostigen [konstigen?] meister verricht,
Der es uss franczose darczu hait gedicht.
Dwile das alle dutschen nit konden verstan,
Habe ich unnutzeliche zcijt darczu versliessen und gethan,
Biss das ich es herczu bracht hain.

Deo gracias

(This book is based on a book that I found a while ago, which was written in Flemish by a skilful [?] master, who translated it from the French. Because the German people cannot understand it, I have devoted much time and effort to bringing this book to this state of completion. Thanks be to God.)

An analysis of the Old French manuscript tradition which underlies the Flemish translation mentioned in the above colophon shows that the latter is based on a French exemplar that is different from the other two Flemish translations (*Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* and the translation of the *Lancelot Compilation*).²⁸ This means that there must

have been at least three different Flemish translations of the *Lancelot en prose* (probably all from the thirteenth century), which attests to the popularity of the *Lancelot-Queste-Mort Artu* in Flanders.²⁹

Having examined the authorship of the prologue to *Arturs doet* and the literary-historical context of this Middle Dutch romance, we can now return to our analysis of the prologue. It is evident from the preceding discussion that the author of the prologue is most probably also the poet of *Arturs doet*. This means that the prologue was conceived as an introduction to the romance and that it reflects the author's vision on the text that he translated. Understanding the prologue to *Arturs doet* could therefore enhance our insight into the poet's interpretation of his Old French source and, as such, it could teach us something about the medieval reception of *La Mort le Roi Artu*.

The prologue to *Arturs doet* contains a general treatise on the art of praying: how should people pray to God in order to be heard? The author deals with this question in a very structured manner. Having introduced the subject by stating that prayers are generally considered greatly beneficial to man, he continues with a brief outline of the central theme. Our prayers fly heavenward on two wings: man's awareness of his sinfulness and his awareness of God's mercy. This insight leads to devotion, which is essential to the perfect prayer (lines 1-32). The rest of the prologue elaborates on this central theme. The author begins by explaining why all good prayers should be accompanied by pious reflection (*heilige pensinge*, 34). Since ignorance lies at the root of imperfect or poor prayers (39-48), we should train our minds into contemplating man's sinful state and God's mercy (49-60). These two aspects (the wings of a prayer) are then discussed in detail. Attention is first paid to the sorry state of this world as a result of man's sinfulness (61-140). As a transition to the second aspect, the author presents the argument that it should be clear to every well-thinking person that this miserable world is no match for the sweet land of heaven and that, therefore, whenever we think of our misery, we should also be reminded of God's mercy (141-60). Having provided various examples of God's boundless mercy (161-94), the author then concludes his discussion of the two wings by reiterating the importance of pious reflection in the process of praying (195-200). A new aspect is introduced into the discussion by the author's linking the state of pious reflection to compunction:

pious reflection begets knowledge, which in turn drives away ignorance and leads to compunction (201-4). Compunction is presented as an essential ingredient in the art of praying, because it instils devotion into the mind, and this, as we have seen before, is indispensable for the perfection of one's prayer (205-9). Before taking a closer look at compunction (213-18), the author first explains what knowledge results from pious reflection: it is self-knowledge, the knowledge that teaches one of the self (210-12). Since devotion is the result of compunction, the next section of the prologue is concerned with this important aspect (219-38). The way is now paved for a discussion of the three cardinal virtues, the pillars of devotion: hope, faith and love (239-62). The author concludes his treatise by briefly summarizing its essence: whoever offers his prayer with a devout mind, that is to say, whoever turns his mind towards God, believing in His omnipotence, trusting in His mercy and devoting himself to the vigilance which must keep him from sinning, may surely cherish the hope that God will hear his prayer (263-76). The prologue ends with a personal prayer in which the author implores the Holy Trinity to have mercy on him and to grant him forgiveness for the sins that he has committed, both in his deeds and in his writing (277-96).

Judging from its contents, the prologue to *Arturs doet* can be divided into two components: a treatise on the art of praying and a personal prayer. How are these two parts related to each other? Since the treatise contains instructions and guidelines for praying, it is possible to assume that the personal prayer of the author reflects the lessons taught in the treatise. This means that the personal prayer in the prologue could be intended as an example of a successful prayer, that is, a prayer that will be well received and heard by God. The question that arises is: what is the author praying for? And, one step further: what was the author's motive for composing this prologue?

With the two-fold structure of the prologue in mind, we shall try to analyse both aspects within the context of the romance. The treatise of the prologue illustrates the importance of prayer on the road to salvation. It is possible that the theme of this part of the prologue was intended as a prelude to the underlying lesson of the romance. *Arturs doet* depicts the fall of Arthur's realm, the end of an era, the end of an ideal. All worldly things are transitory and will

come to an end. Only God's mercy is infinite and endless. The treatise sets the tone for the romance: *vanitas mundi* and *memento mori*: everyone, high and low, rich and poor, healthy and sick, must account for his deeds at the moment of his death. The end of Arthur's world symbolizes not only the end of a chivalrous ideal based on love, trust and brotherhood but also the mortality of all things human and worldly. Many reputable knights of the Round Table are known to have spent their final years doing penance and praying at a religious site. When Lancelot, the paragon of worldly chivalry, dies after four years of praying and fasting, the bishop of Canterbury sees in a dream how Lancelot's soul is carried heavenward by rejoicing angels (12,893-912). Having witnessed this blissful event, the bishop of Canterbury is more convinced than ever that penance is essential to man's salvation:

Ic merke nu wel in minen moet
 Dattie penetentie es goet
 Boven allen saken; ende ic sal
 Penetencie doen min leven al,
 Ende des niet laten te genen dagen. (12,913-17)

(I fully realize now how good penance is above all things; and I shall do penance all and every day of my life without interruption.)

In the end, prayers are more valuable than chivalrous deeds. That this is the theme of the treatise is borne out by the aura of saintliness which surrounds the most valiant of knights at the moment of his death and serves as a constant reminder of man's sinfulness and mortality.

The personal prayer of the prologue, on the other hand, has a poetological ring to it. The author explicitly begs forgiveness for the sins he may have committed in writing. What does he mean? What are these written sins? A clue may be provided by the epilogue:

Ende aldus nemt inde al die sake
 Daer ic af hebbe gehouden sprake.
 Ende meester Woutere Mappe, Godweet,
 Maect hier een inde op dat beheet,
 Dat hi ne vant te desen male
 Van Lancelote meer negene tale;
 Dies makics een inde van al,
 Soe dat hier nieman af spreken sal
 Vortmeer in genen dingen,

Hine salre logene toe mingen.
Ende haddicker af vonden ander saken
In hadde dus niet laten min maken.
Gode ende Marien, der maget soeten,
Biddic dat sijt mi vergeven moeten,
Oftic logene hebbe doen verstaen,
Daer ic iet ane hebbe mesdaen!
Amen.

(13,039-55)

(And so all matters that I spoke about come to an end. And master Walter Map, as God is my witness, gave his word that this is the end and that he did not find any more to be said of Lancelot. That is why I conclude the tale here and why nobody should say more about it, unless he is adding lies to it. And if I had found more on this matter, I would not have settled for less. I pray to God and the sweet Virgin Mary that they will forgive me if I committed any wrongdoing by telling lies!)

It is evident from this epilogue that the Dutch poet begs forgiveness for the lies he may have told while translating his French source. This passage also implies that everything not attested by his source (in this case *La Mort le Roi Artu*, which was wrongly attributed to Walter Map (c. 1140 – c. 1210)) is considered a lie by the author. A similar plea for forgiveness characterizes the personal prayer of the prologue (289-96). Here, too, the Middle Dutch translator asks to be pardoned for his 'literary sins' before he sets out to translate the romance. These passages imply that the medieval author must have considered writing as a responsible and dangerous activity: whatever a poet assigns to parchment must be true; God will punish him for every lie, even if it is told unwillingly or unwittingly. The question that arises is: what exactly is the medieval concept of true and false when it comes to composing written texts? In other words, what is the poetic frame of reference in which we should interpret the prologue to *Arturs doet*?

One of the new insights provided by Walter Haug's inspiring *Literaturtheorie* concerns the discovery of fiction in the twelfth century. According to Haug, the honour of this monumental event must be attributed to the Old French poet Chrétien de Troyes, who was the first to endow fictional (i.e. non-written, oral) material with a meaningful written structure. Haug's analysis of the poetic principles expounded in Chrétien's prologue to *Erec et Enide* (1165), leads to the conclusion that the French poet assigned himself the task of elevating the inferior status of the largely orally transmitted *matière de Bretagne*, by transforming it into a written composition. Instead of

a mere *conte d'aventure* (tale of adventure), the trademark of itinerant storytellers, Chrétien proposed to compose a tale that derived its meaning (*sens*) from its aesthetic form (*conjointure*):

Die Verwandlung des Stoffes durch die *conjointure* muß also fundamental sein: das Publikum darf etwas überraschend Neues erwarten. Oder theoriegeschichtlich ausgedrückt: der Übergang von der Mündlichkeit zur Schriftlichkeit eröffnet der Literatur nicht nur entscheidend neue Dimensionen, sondern Chrétien muß sich auch in einem hohen Maße bewußt gewesen sein, welche literarhistorische Schwelle er mit der Verschriftlichung der arthurischen Materialien überschritten hat.³⁰

(The transformation of narrative matter through the *conjointure* therefore has to be fundamental: the audience is allowed to expect something strikingly new. Or expressed in theoretical [literary-]historical terms: the transition from orality to literacy not only opens up decisively new dimensions to literature, but Chrétien must also have been highly aware which literary-historical threshold he crossed by writing down the Arthurian matter.)

Between the first Old French Arthurian romances composed by Chrétien de Troyes and the Middle Dutch translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu* more than a hundred years have transpired. During that period the genre of Old French Arthurian romances enjoyed widespread popularity, but was also subjected to major changes. An important transformation of the Old French Arthurian romance, both in form and content, is the transition from verse romances to prose romances at the turn of the twelfth century. By depicting verse as a stylistic form that is incapable of expressing the truth because of its adherence to rhyme and metre, authors of prose romances, relying on the authority of biblical and historiographical prose writings, praised their products as truthful and reliable accounts.³¹ Influenced by this new literary trend, the 'matter of Britain' was reshaped into a vast prose chronicle during the first three decades of the thirteenth century. The most influential representative of this new development is the *Lancelot en prose—Queste del Saint Graal—Mort le Roi Artu*.

In spite of the great influence of the Old French Arthurian tradition on the literature of the Low Countries, the verse-prose controversy was not paralleled by similar developments in the form of Middle Dutch (metrical) romances. However, its underlying issue, namely the problem of 'lie' versus 'truth', did become an important theme in thirteenth-century Middle Dutch literature.

Apparently, the use of rhyming couplets was widely accepted as the narrative form of Middle Dutch writings during most of the medieval period. It is not surprising therefore that the majority of Middle Dutch poets used the qualification 'true' or 'false' to express their appreciation or disapproval of a chosen subject matter or a consulted source rather than to indicate stylistic form. An example of the first attitude is found in the prologue of *Het leven van Sinte Lutgart*, a thirteenth-century metrical translation of Thomas of Cantimpré's *Vita Lutgardis*. In this prologue, the Dutch poet expresses his amazement at the fact that so many people are delighted by the songs and stories of minstrels and itinerant singers. How can they possibly believe in the truthfulness of these useless tales about adventures, battles and love? How dare they talk about love, if they themselves do not know that the only true love is the love of God? These tales are nothing but a pack of lies and therefore detrimental to man's salvation!³² The Dutch poet of *Sinte Lutgart* exhorts his public to forgo these stupid stories and other tales of talking animals and dancing donkeys, and to listen to his account of the life of Saint Lutgart, which will be far more uplifting to the soul (94-164).

The prologue to *Het leven van Sinte Lutgart* implies the popularity of worldly romances and the disdain of the Dutch poet for this genre. By praising his own tale as truthful and beneficial to man's salvation (151-60), the *Lutgart*-poet, no doubt competing with his colleagues, the authors or performers of worldly romances, tries to win over the public by emphasizing the deceptive and mendacious nature of secular tales that only aim at pleasing the senses, not at purifying the soul.³³

A different aspect of the 'truth' versus 'lie' discussion in Middle Dutch literature is illustrated by the thirteenth-century Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant, probably the most influential and productive of Middle Dutch authors. Modern research into Maerlant has characterized him as an extremely conscientious poet, who took great pains in 'researching' the reliability of his sources. To the Flemish poet the use of a dependable source is essential to the presentation of a truthful account. Writers who follow a doubtful source cannot but produce falsities and lies. For example, in his prologue to *Der naturen bloeme*, a popularized translation of Thomas of Cantimpré's *De naturis rerum*, Maerlant rejected the (now lost) translation of his colleague Willem Uten Hove, who, in Maerlant's words 'did a poor job of it because he used a French source'.³⁴ In

other words: since Maerlant's *Der naturen bloeme* is derived from a Latin source, this translation should be preferred.

Maerlant's critical attitude towards the trustworthiness of his source and his increasing prejudice against French sources become especially prominent when the poet is dealing with Arthurian material. In his *Historie van den Grale*, a translation of the prose *Joseph d'Arimathie* which he probably made at the beginning of his career as a poet, Maerlant's preoccupation with the truth caused him to interfere with his source whenever he believed it to be incomplete or contradictory of other authoritative sources. While this romance already attests to Maerlant's insistence upon dependable sources and his own uneasiness with the Old French sources used for his translation, his treatment of the Arthurian material in his *Spiegel historiael*, written some twenty years later, is guided by his vehement rejection of French sources and his distinct preference for Latin accounts. Instead of writing about Lancelot or Percival or Agravain – fictitious characters invented by mendacious French romance writers – Maerlant prefers to present a truthful account of the Arthurian matter, based on the (supposedly) dependable *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth.³⁵

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the genre of worldly literature, such as Arthurian romances, enjoyed a mixed reputation. Judging from the vituperations of Middle Dutch poets aimed at these secular tales, Arthurian romances must have been quite popular with the medieval public. On the other hand, these tirades also suggest that the authors of Arthurian romances could not have turned a deaf ear to these critical remarks and that they had to defend themselves against the accusations voiced by rival poets if they did not want to lose out on the market.

We must now return to the prologue to *Arturs doet* in the *Lancelot Compilation*. Unlike Jacob van Maerlant, the Middle Dutch translator of *Arturs doet* apparently did not share the former's distrust of French exemplars. As seen in the epilogue, the Dutch poet assured his public that he did not add anything to his translation which he did not find in the French text (cf. the discussion above, pp. 104–5). On the other hand, the interpolation of Maerlant's version of Arthur's war against the Romans (based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *Historia*) in *Arturs doet*, as a substitution for the Old French reading of this episode, indicates that Maerlant's critical voice on the matter of Britain was strong enough to have influenced the compiler of the *Lancelot Compilation* (cf. pp. 97–8). His preference for Maerlant's

version indicates that he was familiar with the two versions and that somehow he considered Maerlant's account to be better than the French reading. It is also conceivable, of course, that the interpolation was inspired by the predilection of the Dutch public for Maerlant's historical approach in describing this episode.

If we view the Middle Dutch translation of *La Mort le Roi Artu* in the light of contemporary reactions to the Arthurian genre, it becomes more than likely that the poet of *Arturs doet* was acutely aware of the risks involved in this enterprise. The translation of a romance which belonged to a genre that was repeatedly denounced by fellow-poets as mendacious and useless could be harmful to his reputation. Perhaps he was even familiar with Maerlant's outspoken criticism of the French Arthurian romances as unreliable sources. How to solve this dilemma? The Middle Dutch poet must have decided to legitimize his undertaking by imparting a spiritual dimension to the worldly subject of his romance. By emphasizing the sinful nature of man and the importance of prayer for his salvation, the author established an eschatological framework for the worldly events in *Arturs doet*. His treatise about the art of praying is the author's way of linking the secular subject matter of Arthurian romance to a higher truth.

The personal prayer that marks the conclusion of the prologue is strategically placed. Having explained in the preceding treatise how one should prepare the mind for pious devotion prior to the offering of a prayer, the author can now submit his own prayer as an illustration of his teachings. It must be evident to the medieval public that the author's prayer meets the requirements of a prayer that will be favourably received by the Heavenly Father. This implies that the poet's translation of the *La Mort le Roi Artu* will be accepted by God as an act of piety rather than as an example of a sinful pastime. Projected on a more worldly level, the personal prayer of the author served to convince the public that the Arthurian romance rendered by him into Dutch contains a higher truth and that it should therefore not be dismissed as stupid or worthless. Viewed in this perspective, the prologue to *Arturs doet* indicates that this Middle Dutch Arthurian romance is more than just a tale about adulterous love, incest, jealousy and other sinful pursuits: the tragedy of Arthur and the end of the Round Table should remind the medieval public that salvation is more important than worldly riches and splendour.

The prologue to *Arturs doet* proves to be the creation of a skilful

poet, who felt called upon to justify his interest in the Arthurian genre in the face of mounting criticism. The religious nature of the prologue implies that the Dutch poet considered Arthurian romances capable of conveying a higher truth and that, therefore, they are also useful to man's spiritual well-being. Placed in its literary-historical context, the prologue to *Arturs doet* reflects the attitude of a Middle Dutch poet towards the genre of Arthurian romances and, as such, it provides an insight into the medieval reception of the *matière de Bretagne* in the Low Countries.

NOTES

- 1 The research of the first author has been made possible by a fellowship of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. We would like to thank Frank Brandsma and Dieuwke van der Poel for their critical comments.
- 2 For a codicological description, see M. Draak, *De Middelnederlandse vertalingen van de proza-Lancelot*, 2nd edn. Mededelingen der KNAW, afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, deel 17, no. 7 (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1977), pp. 32–46; Bart Besamusca, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse Arturepiek. Een beknopte beschrijving van de handschriftelijke en gedrukte overlevering* (Utrecht: HES, 1985), pp. 24–8; Hans Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek. Een codicologische beschrijving*, 2 vols. Deventer Studiën 9 (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 14–16. An updated description of the codex by J. W. Klein will be published in volume iv of the series 'Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans' (Middle Dutch Lancelot Romances).
- 3 Cf. C. E. Pickford, *L'Evolution du roman arthurien en prose vers la fin du moyen âge d'après le manuscrit 112 du fonds français de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Nizet, 1960).
- 4 Cf. Bart Besamusca, ed., *Lanceloet. De Middelnederlandse vertaling van de 'Lancelot en prose' overgeleverd in de Lancelotcompilatie. Pars 2 (vs. 5531–10740)*. Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans v (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1991), pp. 175–80.
- 5 These romances are: *Perchevaël*, *Moriaen*, *Wrake van Ragisel*, *Ridder metter mouwen*, *Walewein ende Keye*, *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet*, *Torec*.
- 6 Introductory information on the *Lancelot Compilation* can be found in N. J. Lacy, ed., *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland, 1991), p. 272; Orlanda S. H. Lie, *The Middle Dutch Prose Lancelot. A Study of the Rotterdam Fragments and their Place in the French, German, and Dutch 'Lancelot en prose' tradition. With an Edition of the Text*. Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans iii (Amsterdam, Oxford and New York: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1987), pp. 25–9;

- W. Verbeke, J. Janssens and M. Smeyers, eds., *Arturus Rex. Volumen I: Catalogus. Koning Artur en de Nederlanden*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series i, Studia xi (Louvain University Press, 1987), pp. 280-4.
- 7 Cf. J. W. Klein, 'Codicologie en de Lancelotcompilatie: de invoeging van de *Perchevael* en de *Moriaen*', *De nieuwe taalgids* 83 (1990), 526-39.
- 8 W. P. Gerritsen, 'Corrections and Indications for Oral Delivery in the Middle Dutch Lancelot Manuscript The Hague, K.B., 129 A 10', in *Neerlandica Manuscripta. Essays presented to G.I. Liefstinck*. Litterae textualis iii (Amsterdam: Van Gendt, 1976), pp. 39-59.
- 9 Cf. Bart Besamusca, 'The Influence of the *Lancelot en prose* on the Middle Dutch *Moriaen*', in W. van Hoecke, G. Tournoy and W. Verbeke, eds., *Arturus Rex. Volumen II: Acta Conventus Lovaniensis, 1987*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series ii, Studia xvii (Louvain University Press, 1991), pp. 352-60 (with references to the available literature on this subject).
- 10 Cf. W. P. Gerritsen, 'L'épisode de la guerre contre les Romains dans *La Mort Artu néerlandaise*', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, 2 vols. Publications romanes et françaises 112 (Geneva: Droz, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 337-49; *Hoe Artur sinen inde nam. Studie over de Middelnederlandse ridderroman 'Arturs doet'*, door een werkgroep van Groninger neerlandici, 2nd edn (Groningen: Nederlands Instituut, 1983), pp. 207-14; Frank van den Dungen, 'Hoe Walewein sinen inde nam. Restauratie (van de geloofwaardigheid) van de *Lancelot-compilatie*', *De nieuwe taalgids* 79 (1983), 238-55.
- 11 W. J. A. Jonckbloet, ed., *Roman van Lancelot (XIIIe eeuw.)*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Van Stockum, 1846-9), vol. ii, pp. 187-9.
- 12 *Hoe Artur sinen inde nam*, pp. 5-37.
- 13 Walter Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts. Eine Einführung*. Germanistische Einführungen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985); an English translation is in preparation: *Literary Theory in the German Middle Ages* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press).
- 14 Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, pp. 1-5.
- 15 *Roman van Lancelot* iv.289-92: 'Ende ic mote dor uwe genaden / Alle dese wereltlike daden, / Beide die ic doe ende die ic scrive, / Gebeteren in desen armen live!'; iv.296: 'Ic wille te mire jeesten gaen'.
- 16 Cf. Besamusca, *Lanceloet*, pp. 163-6.
- 17 Cf. *Hoe Artur sinen inde nam*, p. 27.
- 18 Evert van den Berg kindly supplied us with these data. We thank him for his generosity in sharing his insights with us.
- 19 Cf. the study of E. van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw en syntaxis. Ontwikkelingen in de versifikatie van verhalende poëzie ca. 1200 - ca. 1400* (Utrecht: HES, 1983), in which a method of dating Middle Dutch narrative poetry is proposed based on Middle Dutch versification and syntax.
- 20 Cf. Besamusca, *Lanceloet*, pp. 158-60.
- 21 Cf. E. van den Berg, 'Genre en gewest. De geografische spreiding van

- de ridderepiek', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 103 (1987), 1-36 (esp. p. 35). See also Gerritsen, 'Corrections', pp. 49-50.
- 22 Cf. Van den Berg, 'Genre en gewest', pp. 34-5.
- 23 W. P. Gerritsen, with the co-operation of A. Berteloot, F. P. van Oostrom and P. G. J. van Sterkenburg, eds., *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte. Fragmenten van een Middelnederlandse bewerking van de 'Lancelot en prose'*. Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans II (Amsterdam, Oxford and New York: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1987).
- 24 Cf. F. P. van Oostrom, *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte. Onderzoekingen over een Middelnederlandse bewerking van de 'Lancelot en prose'*. Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans I (Amsterdam, Oxford and New York: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1981).
- 25 Cf. Besamusca, *Lanceloet*, pp. 120-2. See also W. P. Gerritsen, 'Vertalingen van Oudfranse litteraire werken in het Middelnederlands', in R. E. V. Stuip, ed., *Franse literatuur van de middeleeuwen* (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988), pp. 184-207 (esp. pp. 200-3).
- 26 Cf. Besamusca, *Lanceloet*, chapters 3 and 4.
- 27 Cf. R. Kluge, ed., *Lancelot II: Nach der Kölner Papierhandschrift W. f° 46* Blankenheim und der Heidelberger Pergamenthandschrift Pal. germ. 147. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* 47 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963), p. 115.
- 28 Cf. Orlanda S. H. Lie, 'The Flemish Exemplar of MS W. f° 46* Blankenheim: a Fifteenth-century German Translation of the *Suite de la Charrette*', in W. van Hoecke et al., *Arturus Rex. Volumen II*, pp. 404-18.
- 29 Aside from these three Flemish translations, there was also a Middle Dutch (Brabantine?) prose translation of the *Lancelot en prose*, preserved in two leaves of parchment, the so-called Rotterdam Fragments. See Lie, *The Middle Dutch Prose Lancelot*, for a study and an edition of this translation.
- 30 Cf. Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, pp. 102-4; the passage quoted is on p. 103.
- 31 Cf. Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, pp. 239-47.
- 32 Cf. F. van Veeneghem, ed., *Leven van Sinte Lutgart, tweede en derde boek* (Leiden: Brill, 1899), lines 36-80.
- 33 This type of literary outburst is often found in the prologue of religious or didactic literature; cf., for example, the prologue to *Vanden levne ons Heren*: W. H. Beuken, ed., *Vanden levne ons Heren*, 2 vols. Zwolse drukken en herdrukken 60 (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1968), lines 5-29.
- 34 Cf. E. Verwijs, ed., *Jacob van Maerlant's Naturen Bloeme*. Bibliotheek van Middelnederlandsche Letterkunde (Leiden, 1878; rpt. Arnhem: Gijsbers and Van Loon, 1980), lines 108-9: 'Maer hi wasser in ontraect. / Want hine uten Walschen dichte'.
- 35 Cf. W. P. Gerritsen, 'Jacob van Maerlant and Geoffrey of Monmouth', in K. Varty, ed., *An Arthurian Tapestry. Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe* (Glasgow: Department of French, University of Glasgow, 1981), pp. 368-88.

CHAPTER 7

The 'Roman van Walewein', an episodic Arthurian romance

J. D. Janssens

The term 'episodic Arthurian romance' requires some explanation. Since it was first mentioned by the eminent nineteenth-century French philologist G. Paris,¹ medievalists have often used it as an indication of genre. I use it in contrast with 'historic Arthurian romance' and dissociate myself from the negative connotations of the concept 'episodic Arthurian romance'. For Paris and many others 'episodic' means 'a rambling romance' of a story '[qui] juxtapose purement et simplement, sans souci d'assurer quelque unité organique au poème' ([which] merely and simply juxtaposes, without any effort to construct a unified whole in the poem);² according to these scholars it is the most typical expression of the medieval *Roman à tiroirs* (lit. a 'romance with drawers'). This misleading image³ implies that the drawers can be opened in any possible order, that they are interchangeable, or maybe even left unopened.

To me the term 'episodic' refers to a romance which has for its central interest an episode in the reign of the famous British king, taking for granted the readers' knowledge of Arthur's biography. An episodic story always takes place 'tenen male' (once upon a time) in the history of the Round Table community. 'Episodization' plays down the historical context and presents King Arthur as a symbol of a specific attitude towards life, rather than as the historical sovereign of around 500 AD. From this point of view it might be better to describe the genre as 'non-historical Arthurian romances'.⁴

The most typical example of the genre in Middle Dutch literature is the *Roman van Walewein*. It is generally considered the most interesting and probably the most important Arthurian romance from the Low Countries. *Walewein* is also one of the two Dutch Arthurian romances which have been preserved as an independent whole, that is, not as part of a compilation (with all that this implies

of adaptations or changes brought about by the compiler);⁵ it is a parchment manuscript of 1350, at present kept in Leiden (Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS Letterk. 195, fols. 120v–182r). The romance, which is 11,198 lines long, is the work of two poets. One, a certain Penninc, was apparently responsible for the conception of the entire poem; he wrote about 7,830 lines. Pieter Vostaert completed the work in accordance with Penninc's plan but he did not always work very meticulously. All other information concerning the work is controversial: its date and provenance, its originality, its function and its place in literary history and in the development of the genre in a European perspective. I hope to define my position concerning these problems as clearly as possible. For a better understanding of the problems I first summarize the story.⁶

Walewein starts with a prologue in which Penninc announces that many a story about King Arthur has never been recorded. The story he is about to tell is extremely beautiful, and does not exist in French; he would have translated it if it had existed. He begs God and the angels to help him find the right atmosphere in order that the public may be edified by the story.

King Arthur is holding court in Carleon, as he has done so often, with a number of Knights of the Round Table. Among those present are Ywein, Perchevael, Lancheloot, Duvengael (unknown in other literatures), Keye and the courtly Walewein who is unequalled among those present. After having finished their meal and washed their hands, as befits a company so courtly, they witness a valuable chessboard flying into the room through the window. The knights, stunned into speechlessness, do not dare to move till the chessboard has disappeared, as abruptly as when it first came.

King Arthur insists that someone go and bring him the chessboard otherwise 'wine gecrighen nemmermere . . . ere' (never again we will win honour; 83–4). After the king has repeated this order for the third time his nephew Walewein promises to bring the quest to a successful conclusion. He sends for his armour and horse Gringolet and leaves, teased by Keye's ironic remarks (33–241).

Walewein follows the chessboard until it disappears into a mountain cleft, into which he follows it; the rock then closes behind him. Entrapped in the dark mountain, Walewein in desperation sets about investigating his surroundings. He finds four young dragons, which he kills in a violent battle. But then the dragons' Dam surprises the tired knight and, spitting fire, she puts him in a precarious position. Walewein finds himself stuck in a strangling tailhold, but when the monster flies away with him, he manages to thrust his dagger into her body. In her death throes the monster beats a breach in the mountain wall. Walewein mounts his horse and, not without hesitation, he jumps into a seething mountain river in the depths below

him. Exhausted, knight and horse arrive at the castle of King Wonder (242-782). To his surprise, he finds the King and his son Alydrisonder playing a game of chess on the Flying Chessboard. The king lives up to his name: he possesses the magical power to change himself into any kind of animal; and his castle is absolutely wonderful. The hospitable king takes Walewein to a room with a remarkable bed. The bed, surrounded by four singing golden angels, has the power to heal all those who lie down on it. When Walewein wakes up he is healed of all his wounds. He is invited to a meal and is seated in a special chair, decorated with precious stones, which has the power to protect those seated in it against all evil. Walewein finds the most striking wonder to be the absence of women. Ever since the king has been occupied with miraculous matters, the women have lived separate from the men. Eventually Wonder agrees to part with the Flying Chessboard on condition that Walewein fetches him King Amoraen's miraculous Sword with Two Rings (783-1339).

The following morning Arthur's nephew proceeds on his trip. In a forest he hears the lament of a '*cnape*' (young man): on his way to be knighted by King Arthur, he was robbed of his horse. This loss prevents him from continuing his journey to defend his brother's heritage and to revenge himself on his brother's murderer in a judicial combat. Walewein lends the surprised young man his favourite horse Gringolet and he continues his journey through the woods on foot. He defeats the leader of a gang of robbers, and forces his way into the robbers' castle where he kills everyone: the '*coutume van de felle toorne*' (the unwritten law of brutal toll), through which passers-by were robbed of their possessions, is abolished (1340-706).

In the meantime the *cnape* has been knighted by King Arthur and has returned in time for his duel. The young man kills his opponent; he is about to be attacked by his opponent's furious followers, when Walewein, who happens to arrive at that moment, intervenes and helps the young man win the fight (1707-2841).

After long wanderings Walewein arrives in Ravenstene, King Amoraen's castle. In exchange for the miraculous sword, which, once it has been unsheathed, kills those who come near it, but respectfully submits to Walewein, Amoraen desires the fair Ysabele, daughter of King Assentijn, with whom he has been in love for a long time. Walewein agrees to fetch Ysabele in Endi (India) and is allowed to keep the sword for the time being (2842-3654).

He once again takes his leave and defends a maiden against the violent (*felle*) red knight who cruelly maltreated her. The red knight is defeated by the miraculous sword but dies repentant after Walewein has heard his confession (the so-called secular confession).⁷ At the red knight's special request Walewein buries his body in sacred ground, after having defended it all night against persistent devils. Some time afterwards Arthur's nephew comes across a burning river (Purgatory) crossed by a bridge as sharp as a knife. For a while it seems that the bridge might bring the quest to an early

conclusion. Three times Walewein attempts to cross the river, but in vain. Then he notices a fenced garden and, completely exhausted, he decides to lie down in it and have some sleep (3655-5154).

Nature is a deceptive attraction for the unsuspecting traveller: Roges the fox, who has been robbing people for years, approaches the sleeping knight. Walewein wakes with a start and after he has given the fox a good beating, it tells the sad story of its life to Walewein: 'I used to be a happy lad, son of the king of Ysike. After the death of my mother, my father married a young woman who fell in love with me. At a certain point she made improper suggestions. When I declined her offer, she tore her clothes from her body, called for help and accused me of having wanted to rape her. My father had me exiled but because my stepmother found this too weak a punishment, she cursed and bewitched me and turned me into a fox. I can only regain my human shape when given the opportunity to behold at the same moment Walewein, Ysabele, King Wonder and his son Alydrisonder, an impossible task to fulfil. By way of revenge, an aunt of mine bewitched my stepmother and changed her into a toad. And ever since', the fox continues, 'I have been building the fenced garden beside the burning river, hoping that Walewein would cross my path'. When Walewein reveals his identity, Roges shows the knight a secret passageway underneath the impassable river, which leads to the gates of Endi; Roges himself remains in the garden and will await the return of Walewein and Ysabele (5155-6157).

Through the gates of twelve fortified walls the knight enters the closely guarded country of Endi, but after a heroic battle in which he loses the sword, he is forced to yield to superior powers. He is led off into captivity and there Ysabele (the daughter of King Assentijn) falls head-over-heels in love with him. She immediately devises a plan to free the courageous knight: she pretends to wish to avenge her father's defeats and she asks him for permission to torture the prisoners during one night. By means of a cunning device she has overheard Walewein in the dungeon and she has found out that he, too, has fallen in love with her. She has him taken to a secret compartment in her room [here the second Walewein poet takes over] and there they spend a passionate night together. But a jealous knight who has witnessed their love-play through a hole in the wall, informs Ysabele's father. The lovers are taken by surprise by a group of warriors and are put in separate cells. But the ghost of the red knight, grateful for the Christian burial he received from Walewein, offers his help and both are able to escape from Endi. On their way back to the river Purgatory they recover the Sword with Two Rings, and together with the fox, Roges, Walewein and Ysabele commence their journey to Amoraen (6158-8520).

A reckless young knight claims Ysabele and Walewein is obliged to defend himself against the fierce attacks of his rival, who is killed in the fight. Looking for a place to spend the night, the lovers and the fox are invited to stay at a duke's camp. But when the dead body of the duke's son is brought in, it starts bleeding in the presence of its killer and again Walewein and Ysabele are imprisoned. Driven to superhuman efforts by

love, Walewein manages to escape from the dungeon and the three companions leave for Amoraen's castle. The difficult choice Walewein is confronted with (either renounce his love for Ysabele and continue the quest, or stay with Ysabele and not continue the quest) is settled by the death of Amoraen; Amoraen's son offers him both Ysabele and the sword (8521-9611).

On their return journey they come across a beautiful, cool, peaceful spot in the midst of a fierce, scorched landscape. Walewein decides to take a nap and he sleeps so soundly that a passing black knight is able to abduct Ysabele unnoticed. It turns out that the black knight has no evil intentions, he only wants to be Ysabele's knight. Awoken by Roges, Walewein sets off in pursuit of the couple. After a fierce fight the black knight is defeated and wounded; he turns out to be Estor, a knight of the Round Table and Lancelot's brother. Walewein undertakes the apparently impossible task of healing Estor. Together they arrive at the castle of the *cnape*, who welcomes them gratefully. The next morning they find that the castle is being besieged by the vindictive duke, but the fighting ends in a reconciliation (9612-10883).

Eventually the trio arrives at King Wonder's castle where, wonder of wonders, Roges resumes human shape (at the same time the same thing happens to his stepmother in Ysike). Walewein exchanges the Sword with Two Rings for the Flying Chessboard. A feast is organized and the next day Walewein and his friends return to King Arthur's court (10884-11045).

They walk through a most pleasant landscape [not a trace of the mountain], and without any further difficulties they reach Arthur's court. All rejoice at the reunion. King Assentijn and the King of Ysike join them, both pleased with the course of events. Estor also arrives, completely healed. After having given an account of his adventures, Walewein is unanimously praised. Some say that Walewein married Ysabele and became Arthur's successor, but the poet cannot vouch for these statements.

The *Walewein* ends with an epilogue by Vostaert (11,173-98) in which he informs the reader that it was he, not Penninc, who wrote the last 3,300 lines.

Those familiar with medieval literature will immediately recognize in the *Walewein* a number of recurrent themes, characters and adventures. It is not uncommon for medieval poets to retrieve narrative material (*matière*) from traditional stories and to incorporate this material in a new structure (*conjointure*) with a new message (*sen*). But despite all this, the *Walewein* is an unusual work. The basic structure of the story is new in Arthurian literature: a three-part quest with the execution of each task depending on the success of the former. But, in addition, a flying chessboard, a talking fox, Purgatory pictured as a river, fights with devils, etc., are strange themes for a courtly romance. Moreover, no French work that could have

been the basis for the *Walewein* has come down to us. The underlying structure of the composition, the use of material from different sources (including Middle Dutch), and the hesitations on the part of the second poet suggest not translation but creative poetry. Taking all this into account, we cannot but conclude that the *Walewein* is a highly original work of art.

As seems to be the case with many other original Middle Dutch Arthurian romances,⁸ the originality of the *Walewein* stems largely from the 'Arthurization' of previous narrative material, in particular the introduction of knightly and courtly elements. Since the publication of A. M. E. Draak's doctoral dissertation⁹ it is generally agreed that Penninc has borrowed the underlying structure of his work from the medieval version of the Aarne/Thompson 550 fairy tale (a type of fairy tale to which also Grimm's 'Der Goldene Vogel' belongs).¹⁰

This fairy tale starts with a theme of greed: the king indicates that he wants to possess an extremely beautiful bird. His three sons leave on a quest for the bird but only the youngest is able to complete it successfully. In order to obtain the bird he has to fetch a miraculous sword and a princess, in which he eventually succeeds through craft and guile, thanks to the help of a fox who is actually a bewitched young man. The hero marries the princess and inherits the kingdom.

By accepting the fairy-tale version as the source of the *Walewein* we explain not only the origin of the underlying structure but also that of a series of passages and themes: King Arthur promising his throne to the winner of the Flying Chessboard, the different quest objects, the special bird changed into a flying chessboard, the intervention of the talking fox, etc. Besides, Penninc's prologue perfectly fits the hypothesis: a fairy tale is essentially an oral genre and the poet seems to allude to an oral narrative circuit.

But written sources, too, have played a role in the development and elaboration of the basic structure of the *Walewein*. There is the mechanical wonder-tree with singing golden birds both in King Wonder's kingdom and in Endi; it probably originates from a French or Latin version of an Alexandrian romance.¹¹ There is also the exotic vegetation and the spring of life in Ysabele's Indian garden, clearly influenced by a (French?) version of the famous letter of Prester John.

No one will be surprised by the fact that Penninc and Vostaert have, to a large extent, borrowed from contemporary popular

Arthurian literature. It is peculiar, though, that they have borrowed from both Dutch and French versions and that they did not restrict themselves to the genre of the 'episodic Arthurian romance'.

Penninc used the *Continuation Perceval* of Gerbert de Montreuil for the composition of the love-scene in *Endi*. Around 1230 Gerbert wrote a conclusion to the unfinished *Perceval* or *Conte du Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes, a work written before 1190 and commissioned by Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders. In this continuation, Gerbert tells a peculiar story about Gavains, Arthur's nephew:¹²

At a certain point Gavains arrives at a tent, where he is welcomed by a beautiful maiden called Bloiesine. Between them a romance develops, and when they are attacked in bed, the Knight of the Round Table kills Bloiesine's brother. Later on, Gavains is received at the castle by Bloiesine's father. At that moment the body of the murdered brother is carried in and in the presence of the murderer it starts bleeding heavily. Gavains is imprisoned and Bloiesine tells her father that she intends to torture her brother's murderer during the night. But instead, they spend a romantic night together, after which Gavains manages to escape through cunning.

The resemblance between both works, often very detailed, is striking. It is also striking that Gerbert's Gavains adventure recurs in two parts: Penninc used the ruse of Bloiesine and the prison scene, Vostaert borrowed the so-called episode of the violated right of hospitality with the bleeding-corpse theme. From this we may conclude that Vostaert had more to work on than his predecessor's unfinished poem: possibly he had arranged with Penninc that he would at least use the same sources. This hypothesis is all the more probable because both authors use a second Arthurian romance as a source.

This second romance is the Middle Dutch 'historical' Arthurian romance *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* (*Lancelot of the Cave*). This work, which survives in fragmentary form only, is an adaptation in free verse of the gigantic French *Lancelot en prose*. It was written in Flanders around 1250–60.¹³ At least two adventures were selected and imaginatively adapted by Penninc and Vostaert from the almost endless narrative stream of the Flemish *Lancelot*. While hunting in the woods, young Lancelot lends his horse to a young man who has been robbed and is about to fight a traitor in a judicial combat. The similarity to the first *cnape* episode in the *Walewein* (1340–706) is obvious. For this comparison we are obliged to go back to the French text since the episode is not among the fragments

of the *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* that have survived. However, the second adventure extracted from the *Lantsloot* can be compared directly. It concerns the dangerous obstacle to crossing the fierce river, the infamous 'Sword Bridge' which bars Walewein's way to Endi, which was obviously inspired by Lancelot's most famous adventure.

Lancelot, because of his love for Arthur's wife (who is awaiting him in a castle on the other side of the river), does not hesitate to cross the bridge, though it could cost him his life. Even though the attitudes of Lancelot and Walewein are radically different, the situations are similar, and even the rhyming couplet that introduces the Sword Bridge is almost identical:

Die brugge was scarp als een scers
Die daer lach over twater dwers (LH)¹⁴

(The bridge that was lying diagonally over the water was as sharp as a razor blade)

Entie brugge diere leghet dwers
Soe es scarper dan .i. scers (Wal, 5043-4)

(And the bridge that is lying over it diagonally, it is sharper than a razor blade)

If we accept the fact that Penninc knew and used *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* we can draw further conclusions. The epithet 'der adventures vader' (father of adventures), applied to Walewein and unknown in Arthurian romances from other countries, seems to have been borrowed from *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*. The expression presumably originated in the translation process of French prose into Middle Dutch verse.¹⁵ This is probably also the case with the typically Middle Dutch description of Walewein as 'Artur's suster sone' (Arthur's sister's son) for the more general 'li niés le roi Artus'.¹⁶ Penninc borrowed other names too: that of Arthur's residence, 'Carlioen', and that of the Knight Marshal, 'Keye die drussate'; in the same source Vostaert learned about the Knight of the Round Table Hestor (spelled identically). But in addition other, more general, material was borrowed from *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*. The protective chair of the *Walewein* (1015-21) seems to correspond to the 'Siège Périlleux' in the *Lancelot en prose* (unfortunately the corresponding passage in *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* has not survived).¹⁷ Furthermore, there is Walewein's fight against the

dragons in the mountain (242–782), which largely corresponds to the fight of Duke Galestin against the fire-spitting dragons in *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* (2894–3041).

The *Walewein* is different from French non-historical Arthurian romances in which episodes are told against the backdrop of the *Roman de Brut* of Wace. The *Walewein* appears to highlight one specific period of Arthur's reign against the background of the story of *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*. The latter work tells the history of King Arthur as a succession of adventures of old and new knights of the Round Table, who constantly take off and return; once in a while the journeys are interrupted by a day of rest at the court (with hardly ever everyone present), after which a new quest is begun.¹⁸ Penninc seems to have devised the Arthurian events on the lines of the *Lancelot* trilogy. The day at court with which the *Walewein* starts is one in a series of holidays; a number of Arthur's knights are absent. Arthur's court is at Carlioen, which is modern Caerleon, on the river Usk:

Ende hilt hof na coninc sede
Also hi menichwerven dede
Met een deel zire man

(35–7)

(And he held court in the king's way, as he often did, with a number of his vassals.)

Penninc and Vostaert based themselves on two works, each one stemming from a different tradition, that of Chrétien de Troyes (Gerbert's *Continuation Perceval*) and that of the 'historical' Arthurian cycle (*Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*). This caused a certain ambiguity in the *Walewein*,¹⁹ which at least partly explains the original character of its narrative universe and style. A number of the characteristics of the French episodic Arthurian romances of, among others, Chrétien de Troyes, are practically non-existent in the *Walewein*: strongly individualized descriptions, sophisticated monologues about inner struggles, subtle forms of dialogue, the ironic colouring of certain characters (including Gavains') and the suggestively mysterious atmosphere of what W. Haug calls *Verrätselung*.²⁰ Instead, the *Walewein* offers a plain idealization of the principal character and straightforward propaganda for the courtly life. Even though the *Walewein* poets have tried to link up with the *Lancelot en prose*, they, like the poet of *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* before them, have greatly reduced the modernism of *Lancelot en prose* by using

verse instead of prose and by returning to the first-person narrative.²¹ Many original features of the *Walewein* can be explained as the borrowing and imitation of themes and narrative strategies from *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, an Arthurian romance of a different genre.

A number of elements in the *Walewein*, however, cannot be explained on the basis of the fairy tale or any of the other sources mentioned above. We therefore have to accept that the Middle Dutch poets and their court milieu had direct contact with Celtic literature and British situations.

A key passage in this context is the sad story of the life of Roges, the fox. The negative role played by the stepmother, the spell that resulted in Roges' transformation into a fox, the impossible condition for undoing the spell and the counter-spell all clearly point in the direction of Celtic literature. Moreover, it seems that this combination of spell and counter-spell can be found only in Gaelic Celtic (i.e. Irish and Scottish) stories and that the *Walewein* is the only continental story containing this theme.²² But there are more Celtic themes. At the start of his lament Roges looks back on his carefree youth with a loving mother who tried to bring her son up well:

She taught me how to ride a horse, she loved and respected me. She taught me how to break blows with my shield and to strike back. She taught me how to behave in a tournament, how to manoeuvre back and forth, to break spears, to unhorse a knight and to fight with the sword.

She taught me how to serve maidens. She taught me how to play chess well, and backgammon, and how to throw a ball and cast stones in the valley. She taught me how to fly like a falcon or a hawk with wings. And that I can do well, courageous knight! She taught me how to swim like a fish with fins. All that I manage very well, and on top of all that, I speak six different languages. Therefore I was not in awe of anyone, great or small. (5333-56)

A boy's education by his mother, including knightly-military skills, is referred to twice in the *Walewein*. The second time Walewein himself is the subject. Fighting his way into Endi, Walewein shows his military skills about which the author says:

Walewein toghede hem sine consten
Die hem sijn moeder heeft gheleert (6304-5)

(Walewein showed them the skills his mother had taught him.)

This untraditional representation of mothers introducing their sons to the use of arms is undoubtedly a survival from a matriarchal society and a typically Celtic theme.²³

These elements of Celtic origin are not found in French literature. It is obvious that the poets did not find their information in French Arthurian romances because they named the principal character Walewein and not Gauvain/Gavains. But here we enter an extra-literary domain.

In the year 1118, a certain Vualauuaynus (Walewein), his brothers Radulfus, Eggebertus and Razo van Melle, and one Hendrik van Heusden, donated an area of land to Saint Peter's abbey in Ghent. For such a transaction to be legal the donors had to be of age at the time it took place; so the Walewein mentioned must have been born around the end of the eleventh century. Since this unusual name does not appear on the Christian calendar of saints, he can only have been named after the literary Walewein, known, presumably, through an oral tradition. It goes without saying that within this tradition Walewein must have been presented in a very good light. The same can be argued about Iwein, another name that can be traced back to the early history of the Low Countries. It was given to one of the later peers of Flanders, Iwein van Aalst (d. 1145), and therefore it probably had a wider distribution than the name Walewein. It is, however, intriguing that the Walewein and Iwein tradition was popular in the Low Countries before the history of King Arthur was recorded in the 'scholarly' chronicle *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136) by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and before the first Arthurian romance, *Erec et Enide* (around 1170), by Chrétien de Troyes.

The early tradition of the names Walewein and Iwein can only be explained through direct contact with England.²⁴ It should be seen in relation to the conquest of England by William of Normandy (1066). William was accompanied by quite a number of Flemish noblemen (William's wife Mathilde was the daughter of the Count of Flanders), many of whom were rewarded with English lands, as recorded in the *Domesday Book* (1086). We know that some of them settled in the new Norman kingdom, but they undoubtedly remained in contact with their homeland. When one of the most important Flemish-Norman noblemen, Gilbert van Gent, was a witness to the signing of a charter in Bergen in 1075,²⁵ he was introduced as 'Giselbertus . . . qui ab Anglia tunc venerat' (Gilbert

who then came from England). A number of Flemish noble families had already settled in southern Scotland. Their presence is attested in charters from the first half of the twelfth century: Jordan Flandrensis in the Valley of the Tweed (on the English–Scottish border), Baldwinus Flaminganus, Thankardus and ‘Lambin le Flemynge’, all members of different families in the Valley of the Clyde (the area around Glasgow) and Petrus Flandrensis in Kirkcudbright (in Galloway, between Glasgow and Carlisle).²⁶ Many Flemings had settled in the north even earlier and held high positions there: as early as 1068 a Fleming by the name of Robrecht van Komen was governing Northumberland. In the year 1107 a number of these people were, on the orders of King Henry I, transferred to South Wales (Pembrokeshire). There was a Flemish-speaking colony there until the sixteenth century.²⁷ It is a tempting hypothesis that these Flemish of the north formed the link between, on the one hand, an early Middle Dutch Walewein and Iwein tradition and, on the other hand, a Celtic heritage. For one thing, we know that the name Iwein goes back to the historical Celtic sovereign Owain, son of Urien. He reigned over Reged (Galloway and Cumberland, around Carlisle) and was highly praised by the bard Taliesin as the architect of the last northern British victory in 593.²⁸ The name Walewein, too, presumably has northern antecedents: the Anglo-Norman historian William of Malmesbury connects him with Galloway in southern Scotland around 1125: ‘Walwen, the ... nephew of Arthur by his sister, reigned in that part of Britain now called Walweitha. He was a warrior most renowned for his valour.’²⁹

If it is correct that the Celtic themes and the names and high reputations of a number of knights of the Round Table were brought back to their homeland by Flemish people in Anglo-Norman service, it may be assumed that the Walewein and Iwein fashion was mainly located at Flemish courts:³⁰ Gilbert van Gent, Walewein van Melle and Iwein van Aalst not only belonged to the same aristocratic milieu, they were also related. Would it be difficult then to accept it as a fact that an oral tradition remained alive within this milieu (cf. the prologue to the *Walewein*)? And could that not be an explanation for the central position occupied by the figure of Walewein in Middle Dutch Arthurian literature?

In the above I have given a first suggestion as to the provenance of the *Walewein*. From the dialectical influences in the language of the text of the one surviving manuscript we can deduce that the work

has to be situated in the county of Flanders (West Flanders). Besides, the *Walewein* is also punctuated with a number of allusions to oriental situations: allusions to a harem, oil-fields with 'water' going up in flames, an oasis and the exotic dream-reality of India. The chances of these allusions being understood were quite high in Flanders because from the very beginning the counts had taken a great interest in the crusades. None of these indications is conclusive on its own, but in combination they lead to the following hypothesis: the *Walewein* is an original Arthurian romance written around the middle of the thirteenth century and based on a number of sources. Its place of origin is a Dutch-speaking court in Flanders.

A final intriguing question remains: why did Penninc and Vostaert bring together this strange amalgam of themes and elements of different origin? It may be that the *Walewein* poets wanted to play a competitive game with their colleague and predecessor, the poet of *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*. At a certain moment during the quest Walewein faces the infamous Sword Bridge, but he has absolutely no intention of tackling this life-threatening obstacle. Here an audience familiar with *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* was offered an intertextual contrast with the famous Lancelot adventure; a contrast that at the same time created a 'surplus' of meaning, as Penninc suggests that, unlike Lancelot, Walewein is not driven by (adulterous) love. The conclusion he wishes us to draw is that, even though Lancelot is one of the best knights of the Round Table, Walewein is better. An audience familiar with the Lancelot material will have noticed the shift, for in *Lantsloot* the opposite is true. In this we recognize the aim of the *Walewein* poets. They wanted to write a 'mirror of courtliness'. Courtesy in language and attitude, correct methods of fighting, splendid meals and magnificent, luxurious artefacts, courtly table manners, kindness, the use of the sword in service of the needy – all these were presented as components of refined society. This concept was based on an ideal supposedly realized at the time of King Arthur and his nephew. In this respect Penninc and Vostaert have intensified certain characteristics in their sources, such as idealization and 'courtification'. It seems as if they wanted to propagate a courtly ideal rooted in a concern for society (and the concept of 'honour' connected with it), rather than one rooted in adulterous (however high-minded) love and unconditional courtly service, as they knew it from *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*.

The authors also seemed to distance themselves from the Grail

mysticism. The beginning of the *Walewein* must have sounded peculiar to its audience if they were familiar with the complete *Lancelot* trilogy, including the *Queste del Saint Graal* (not an unreasonable assumption in Flanders).³¹ As in the famous Grail romance, the knights are seated around King Arthur's table; suddenly a miraculous object appears in their midst; no one moves. Arthur is the first to speak, followed by his nephew. There is a striking parallelism with the mysterious appearance of the Grail at Whitsun. But this intertextual similarity will turn into a contrast later on in the story. The quest of *Walewein* will not lead to a reversal of the knightly and courtly pattern of values, as in the other *Queste*; it will not end in the mystical vision of the supernatural mystery of the Grail. On the contrary, the *Walewein* quest will end in the affirmation of the validity of the courtly attitude to life in a worldly perspective. Eschatological aspects are suggested by the river Purgatory, the devils trying to get hold of the red knight's soul, the miraculous Sword with Two Rings (possibly a replica of the *Espee aus Estranges Renges*³²). But all these elements are denuded of any profound religious meaning; their function is merely to decode aspects of courtly behaviour.

A textual comparison of the *Walewein* and the *Lancelot* and Grail material reveals the former as a mirror of courtliness that formulates the ideal in human proportions. This, I believe, is one of the most fundamental characteristics of the Middle Dutch episodic Arthurian romance. *Walewein* is the incarnation of that ideal. It may therefore be more than just a coincidence that Arthur's nephew makes such a striking appearance in the Middle Dutch romances of the second half of the thirteenth century.

NOTES

- 1 See G. Paris, 'Romans en vers du cycle de la Table Ronde', *Histoire littéraire de la France* xxx (1888), pp. 20 and 82–6.
- 2 The statements refer to the *Vengeance Raguidel* and are found in the works of J. D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings down to the Year 1300*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1923), vol. II, p. 214, and A. Micha, 'Raoul de Houdenc est-il l'auteur du Songe de Paradis et de la Vengeance Raguidel?', *Romania* 68 (1944–5), 348.
- 3 The image plays an important role in the study of William W. Ryding, *Structure in Medieval Narrative* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971), e.g. on p. 43.

- 4 See J. D. Janssens, 'The Influence of Chrétien de Troyes on Middle Dutch Arthurian Romances: a New Approach', in N. J. Lacy, D. Kelly and K. Busby, eds., *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987-8), vol. II, p. 291.
- 5 All other Arthurian romances, except the *Roman van Ferguut*, have come down to us in the so-called *Lancelotcompilatie* in The Hague. See Janssens, 'The Influence of Chrétien de Troyes', pp. 285-9.
- 6 The most recent edition is by G. A. van Es, *De jeeste van Walewein en het schaakbord van Penninc en Pieter Vostaert*, 2 vols. (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1957); the first volume (text) has been reprinted unchanged as *Roman van Walewein* (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink/Noorduijn, 1976). For translations into Modern English, see the Appendix. Readers should be warned against incomplete or ambiguous summaries of the work, such as that by G. Paris in his 'Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde' (*Romania* 15 (1886), 1-24), upon which L. Hibbard based her article 'The Sword Bridge of Chrétien de Troyes and its Celtic Original', *Romanic Review* 4 (1913), 166-90, and because of which she came to the wrong conclusions about the famous Walewein adventure.
- 7 If no priest was available laymen were allowed to hear a dying person's confession.
- 8 For example the *Roman van Moriaen* and the *Roman van de Riddere metter Mouwen*; see S. Smith, 'Richars en de Riddere metter Mouwen toch neven? Nieuwe aandacht voor een oude hypothese', *Voortgang. Jaarboek voor de Neerlandistiek* 9 (1988), 103 and 107.
- 9 A. M. E. Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein. (Met aanvullend hoofdstuk over 'Het Walewein onderzoek sinds 1936')* (Haarlem, 1936; rpt. Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis; Amsterdam: Bert Hagen, 1975).
- 10 See A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale. A Classification and Bibliography*. Antti Aarne's 'Verzeichnis der Märchentypen' translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, 2nd revision. FF Communications 184 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1961).
- 11 Draak, *Onderzoekingen*, pp. 177-82.
- 12 See the edition of M. Williams, *Gerbert de Montreuil. La Continuation de Perceval* (II) (Paris: Champion, 1925), 7021-14078.
- 13 For more information on the Dutch *Lancelot* texts, see the contribution by Bart Besamusca and Orlanda S. H. Lie.
- 14 See W. P. Gerritsen, ed., *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte. Fragmenten van een Middelnederlandse bewerking van de 'Lancelot en prose'*. Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans II (Amsterdam, Oxford and New York: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1987), lines 3823-4. The last word of the first line of the fragment is 'scermes', but this is probably an interference of the copyist.
- 15 See J. D. Janssens, 'Oude en Nieuwe wegen in "het woud zonder genade"'. (Terreinverkenning voor verder onderzoek van de Mnl. niet-historische Arturroman)', *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 75 (1982), 299-303.

- 16 Janssens, *Oude en Nieuwe wegen*, p. 308.
- 17 See B. Besamusca, 'De beschermende zetel in de *Walewein*. Een kanttekening bij de ontwikkeling van de roman in de Lage Landen', in E. L. J. M. van Lijstelaar *et al.*, eds., *Van frictie tot wetenschap. Jaarboek 1990-1991 Vereniging van Akademie-onderzoekers* (Amsterdam: KNAW, 1991), pp. 15-28.
- 18 For the court days, see, notwithstanding its fragmentary state, *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, 4190-3 and 5001-5.
- 19 Janssens, 'The Influence of Chrétien de Troyes', pp. 291-306.
- 20 W. Haug, 'Das Land, von welchem niemand wiederkehrt'. *Mythos, Fiktion und Wahrheit in Chrétiens 'Chevalier de Charrete', im 'Lanzelet' Ulrichs von Zatzikhoven und im 'Lancelot'-Prosaroman* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), pp. 29-30.
- 21 F. P. van Oostrom, *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte. Onderzoekingen over een Middelnederlandse bewerking van de 'Lancelot en prose'* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1981), pp. 97-125.
- 22 Draak, *Onderzoekingen*, pp. 123-7.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 24 W. P. Gerritsen, 'Walewein van Melle (anno 1118) en de Oudnederlandse Arturliteratuur', *Naamkunde* 16 (1984), 133-4.
- 25 W. Verbeke, J. Janssens and M. Smeyers, eds., *Arturus rex. Volumen 1: catalogus. La matière de Bretagne et les Anciens Pays-Bas*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series I, Studia XVI (Louvain University Press, 1987), p. 110.
- 26 J. A. Fleming, *Flemish Influence in Britain* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie, 1930), vol. II, pp. 13-26.
- 27 G. Dept, 'Een Vlaamsche kolonie in Wales', *Annales de la Société d'Emulation de Bruges* LXXIV (1931), 25.
- 28 J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur. A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650*, vol. II, 2nd edn (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1977), pp. 232-7.
- 29 R. Barber, *The Figure of Arthur* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 115.
- 30 V. Uyttersprot, 'Arturnamen tot 1300', in W. Verbeke *et al.*, eds., *Arturus Rex*, p. 115.
- 31 See M. A. Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', in Christopher Kleinhenz, ed., *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1976), pp. 84-7.
- 32 Cf. G. D. West, *An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Prose Romances* (University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 108.

PART III

‘Reynard the Fox’

CHAPTER 8

Words and deeds in the Middle Dutch Reynaert stories

Paul Wackers

To Jill Mann

In real life animals never speak. We explain their behaviour by relating it to their instincts or their nature, but there is no linguistic commentary from the animals themselves to guide our interpretation. With people, however, there is a continual interaction between behaviour and speech – between what is done and what is said about it. So it is not surprising that a major theme of beast fable and beast epic – the literary genres in which animals are endowed with the power of speech – is the relation between words and deeds, and in particular the discrepancy between the two.¹ This study will attempt to show how this theme is developed in the Middle Dutch animal epics *Van den vos Reynaerde* and *Reynaerts historie*.

First, some general information about both poems by way of introduction. The only thing we know for certain about the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* is that his name was Willem.² The work was probably written in or around Ghent in the thirteenth century (before 1279).³ *Van den vos Reynaerde* is generally considered by modern critics to be one of the most accomplished animal epics of the Middle Ages, but it had only one direct imitator, *Reynaerts historie*.⁴ Even less is known about this poem than about *Van den vos Reynaerde*. Its author is unknown. It was composed around 1400, or perhaps even later, in the first half of the fifteenth century, probably in Flanders.⁵ *Reynaerts historie* follows the story-line of *Van den vos Reynaerde* closely, but makes regular changes of detail. The ending, however, is radically changed so as to create the possibility of a sequel which mirrors the first part of the story, with a duel between Reynaert and Ysegrim⁶ the wolf as a new motif. The situation at the end of each story is also very different. At the end of *Van den vos Reynaerde*, Reynaert and his family disappear from the kingdom of

Nobel, where peace is once again restored, while at the end of *Reynaerts historie* the fox holds the highest position at court under the king, and plays an essential part in the hierarchical structure of the kingdom.

Reynaerts historie was enormously successful. Its various Dutch versions were constantly in print right up to the late nineteenth century. Caxton's English translation (Westminster, 1481) initiated an English tradition. Its German translation (Lübeck, 1498) similarly founded a German tradition, of which the best-known representative is Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*. The German version in turn led to translations into Latin, Danish, Swedish, etc. It is no exaggeration to say that *Reynaerts historie* is the most successful animal epic in the history of the European tradition.

A discussion of the theme 'words and deeds' in *Van den vos Reynaerde* and *Reynaerts historie* should start with a few comments on this theme itself. It always involves the question of where reality lies, because it is the divergence between words and deeds that is the focus of interest in the animal epics that make use of this theme. Words are used to justify or to disguise undesirable behaviour, or to manipulate the behaviour of others to the advantage of the speaker. (By flattering him the fox talks the cock into closing his eyes and thus he is able to catch him.) This sort of verbal 'massaging' of reality is reasonably straightforward. What is more remarkable is that in animal epics in particular there is often an extra dimension to the relation between words and reality: that is, words effectively take the place of reality within the story.⁷ In the *Ysengrimus*, for example, the flaying of the wolf is described only briefly (III, 951–62), but the episode in which it occurs is very long because of the very lengthy speeches in which this simple action is interpreted in all sorts of different ways. (For example, before the flaying the fox congratulates the wolf on the honour his family will be receiving from the 'lending' of his skin to the lion. After the flaying the fox pretends to be amazed that the wolf had concealed such a splendid scarlet robe – the wolf's dripping blood – under a shaggy pelt.⁸) The Middle Dutch Reynaert stories show a similar interest in the relation between narrative action and verbal representation, but the relation is of an entirely different nature in each case, as I shall show.

In *Van den vos Reynaerde*, the author has tried to create an autonomous narrative reality within his story. The behaviour of the

animals is both causally coherent, and comprehensible in psychological terms. The poem begins with a list of complaints about Reynaert, from Ysegrim the wolf and Pancer the beaver (on behalf of Kuwaert the hare) among others. Grimbeert the badger disputes the accusations, but Reynaert's treachery is conclusively proved by the arrival of the body of the murdered hen Coppe at court. As a result, the fox is three times summoned to court, and, when he finally appears there, condemned to death. The climax of the story is the 'confession' in which Reynaert mentions his possession of a fabulous treasure. This arouses the king's greed, and enables Reynaert to regain his favour. He takes the opportunity to revenge himself on his enemies, Bruun the bear and Ysegrim, and he also manages to lure Kuwaert and Bellijn, the ram, to his den. He then murders Kuwaert and sends back his head, so that his trickery is revealed. All these actions form an interconnected and coherent plot, which gives *Van den vos Reynaerde* a very modern feel. No other medieval animal epic has so close a connection between the actions that make up its narrative. The *Ysengrimus* is made up of a loose series of episodes, connected mainly by theme and the re-appearance of the same characters, mainly the fox and the wolf. The three parts of *Reinhart Fuchs* (the first two of which are more or less independent episodes) are also connected by theme rather than by plot. The separate Branches of the *Roman de Renart* are structured on the principle of an anthology, rather than on the kind of coherent narrative development found in *Van den vos Reynaerde*.⁹

The author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* also creates a psychological plausibility by enlightening us as to the animals' motives. This information is largely conveyed through dialogue, and in particular through the way in which the animals react to each other's words. Conversation thus becomes the most prominent feature of the poem's literary style. The information implicit in the dialogue is supplemented by comments from the poet himself which guide the audience's interpretation of the verbal exchanges. Two examples will illustrate the point. The first is the conversation between Bruun and Reynaert at the gate of Maupertuus, Reynaert's castle. The bear sits down at the gate and says:

'Sidi in huus Reynaert?
Ic bem Bruun des coninx bode.
Die hevet ghezwoeren bi sinen gode,
Ne comdi niet ten ghedinghe

Ende ic u niet voer mi bringhe
 Recht te nemene ende te gevene
 Ende in vreden voert te leveene,
 Hi doet u breken ende raden.
 Reynaerd doet dat ic u rade
 Ende gaet met mi te hove waert.' (524-33)

('Are you at home, Reynaert? I am Bruun, the messenger of the king. He has sworn by his God that if you do not come to court, and I do not bring you there to receive the law and satisfy justice and live in peace henceforth, he will have you broken on the wheel. Reynaert, do as I advise you and come with me to court.')

Bruun's speech fits his role as the king's messenger. His words are weighty, even pompous, larded with legal formulas.¹⁰ Reynaert's response to Bruun's speech is to withdraw to the darkest corner of his den, the symbol of his devious mind, and there, the narrator tells us, he thinks up a plan to disgrace Bruun and retain his own honour ('Menichfout was sijn ghedochte / Hoe hi vonde sulken raet'; 542-3). The audience is therefore forewarned; we know that Reynaert has thought things through and is planning to deceive the bear. His first words to Bruun do not betray his intentions, however. He is extremely friendly to the bear, calling him 'Heere Bruun, wel soete vrient' (Lord Bruun, fine friend; 549). He thanks Bruun for his good advice and regrets that he has had to make such an arduous journey, all to no purpose, since Reynaert would already have been at court if he had not been suffering from stomach ache, brought about by having eaten strange foreign food. Bruun reacts immediately: 'Reynaert, wat aetstu, wat?' (Reynaert, what did you eat, what?; 562). The pure greediness of the bear is instantly revealed in this one sentence, without a word from the narrator.

Reynaert responds with affected detachment, first saying only that it was bad stuff ('cranke have'); poor people have to eat what they can get, including some things they would not touch if they had the choice. Then his treacherous intentions become clear – to us, if not to Bruun: 'Goeder versscher honichraten' (good fresh honeycombs; 567) is the food that has disagreed with him.

In the first Branch of the *Roman de Renart*, on which this scene is based, the fox likewise alludes to his poverty.¹¹ But the allusion has less narrative coherence in the French version than it has in *Van den vos Reynaerde*. In the French version, Renart mentions his large meal because he says it is unusual for poor people to get much food at court. He enlarges on this theme, ending by saying that he has eaten

'six portions of fresh honey out of good combs' (556). Bruun then says he would like to have some too. The primary purpose of the speech is criticism of the court and its neglect of poor people; only at the end is it directed towards the enticement of Bruun. In contrast, in *Van den vos Reynaerde* Reynaert's poverty is made the cause of his having been obliged to eat such indigestible food as honey. His excuse for not having appeared at court and his regrets at Bruun's unnecessary journey directly introduce the hidden enticement of the bear, so that the scene becomes more compact. What is more, Reynaert's treachery is revealed in his own words: he praises the food he has had to eat even while ostensibly complaining about it. Prepared by the narrator's earlier comment, the audience sees through Reynaert's words to the treacherous intentions behind them. Bruun's character is likewise apparent in his speech – for example, in his greedy reaction to the mere mention of a strange new food ('vremder, nieuwer spise'; 558). His failure to see the discrepancy between Reynaert's disparagement of the 'new food' and his praise of it as 'good' and 'fresh', a discrepancy which might lead him to suspect the fox's treachery, is also an indication of his stupidity and greed. In the French *Renart*, in contrast, the bear does not become excited until the fox specifically mentions honey, and the fox speaks of the honey only in laudatory terms, so that there are no clues to his hidden deceit. Comparison with the French *Renart* thus shows that the animals' words in this scene in the Dutch poem are much more important indicators of their characters and motives than in the source.

When Bruun hears that Reynaert has been eating honey, his stately manner of address dissolves into excited spontaneity:

'Helpe, lieve vos Reynaert
 hebdi honich dus onwaert?
 Honich is een soete spijse
 Die ic voer alle gherechten prijse,
 Ende voer alle gherechten minne.
 Reynaerd helpt mi dat ics ghewinne.
 Edele Reynaert, soete neve,
 Also langhe als ic leve,
 Willic u daer omme minnen.
 Reynaerd helpt mi dat ics ghewinne.'

(575–84)

('Help, dear Reynaert fox. Do you think honey so awful? Honey is sweet food, which I value above all other dishes and prefer to them all. Reynaert, help me to get some. Noble Reynaert, dear cousin, I shall love you for it as long as I live. Reynaert, help me to get some!')

The change in attitude from the bear's earlier address to Reynaert is evident in his respectful and flattering epithets ('edel', 'soet', 'neef'), while the repetitions and lack of connected development betray his excitement (compare the parallels between 578 and 579, and the verbatim repetition in 580 and 584). Again, language portrays the inner state of an animal.

The dialogue continues (still without intervention by the author). Reynaert pretends to find it unbelievable that anyone would wish to eat honey, but at the same time emphasizes that he has an enormous store of it. Bruun protests that he is capable of eating a lot of it. Then Reynaert's hidden aim is revealed: he declares himself willing to get honey for Bruun if the bear will become his ally and help him at court (606-7). The narrator rounds off the dialogue as follows:

Doe quam Brune ende ghinc gheloven
Ende sekerde Reynaerde dat
Wildine honichs maken zat
– Des hi cume ombiten sal –
Hi wilde wesen over al
Ghestade vrient ende goet geselle.
Hier omme loech Reynaert die felle ... (608-14)

(Then Bruun made a sacred vow to Reynaert that if Reynaert would stuff him with honey – of which he will taste little – he would be a loyal friend and good comrade in all circumstances. Reynaert the perfidious laughed at this.)

The outcome of the preceding dialogue is summarized in this passage: the treachery behind Reynaert's words is emphasized (611, 614), and an indication of the end of the adventure is given: Bruun is going to get something quite different from honey.¹²

The second example I wish to examine in detail is the conversation between the royal couple and Reynaert about the treasure. The conversation runs on lines similar to the dialogue with Bruun, but this time Reynaert does not win so easily. For one thing, the intellectual capacity of his opponents is considerably greater. The situation is as follows: Reynaert, having been condemned to death, is given permission to make a public confession. During this confession he says that his friendship with Ysegrim has put him in difficult circumstances, because the wolf and his family ate nearly all that they jointly captured. Were it not for the great treasure he had, he would never have survived. The king asks to hear more about this treasure. Reynaert says it was originally his father's, and was

intended to finance a plot against Nobel. Apart from Reynaert's father, the participants in the plot were Grimbeert the badger, Ysegrim the wolf, Tybeert the cat, and Bruun the bear, who was going to be made king instead of Nobel. Reynaert discovered the plot and the whereabouts of the treasure, and secretly carried it off, so that the plot was foiled. Yet now Bruun and Ysegrim are highly esteemed and Reynaert is condemned to death (2065–490).

The king and queen (who are, the narrator tells us, motivated by self-interest: 2492) take Reynaert on one side. They ask him to disclose where the treasure is hidden. Reynaert replies that he would be mad to give the treasure to someone who wants to hang him (2497–9). The queen intervenes, promising that the king will let him live; in future he will be Nobel's loyal servant (2500–5). The unspoken implication is that naturally a loyal subject would inform his king of the whereabouts of a treasure. Reynaert responds by spelling out this implication in plain terms: if the king pardons his crimes and promises him his favour, he will give the king the treasure. This exchange is the reverse of the conversation between Reynaert and Bruun in that here it is Reynaert who speaks plainly and his greedy victim who resorts to circumlocution. The latter aspect shows the greater intellectual and verbal capacities of Reynaert's opponents in this instance; the former is a consequence of the fact that Reynaert has already worked all the elements of his deceit into his public confession and the story of the treasure, as soon becomes clear.

Still the king hesitates. Reynaert has always been a liar; what reason is there to believe him now? It is not Reynaert but the queen who answers: this time Reynaert can be believed. Has he not accused his own father and his cousin Grimbeert? He would never have done this if his story were not true. This, of course, is precisely the reason why Reynaert wove this element into his string of lies (2227–37). Reynaert's lies are brilliantly designed to influence the queen's reactions at this point. The king thus changes his mind. In line with his wife's advice, he will pardon Reynaert, though he fears what may follow. He warns Reynaert against further treachery, which would have disastrous consequences for the fox and all his race (2528–37). Reynaert sees that the king has yielded, and – the author tells us – is secretly delighted (2539); aloud, he says he would be a fool not to promise this (that is, to give up his treachery; 2540–1). This is of course perfectly true, for if Reynaert refused to

make this promise his plan would come to nothing. In actual fact his words do not constitute a promise even though the royal couple interpret them as doing so. The king picks up a piece of straw and hands it to Reynaert as a symbol of forgiveness. Overjoyed, Reynaert thanks the king and in his turn picks up a piece of straw which he hands to the king in token of his transfer of the treasure into his hands.

The confrontation between Reynaert and the king does not run as smoothly and quickly as that between Reynaert and Bruun. The deception of the king is accomplished in stages, and it often seems as if he will refuse to be fooled. The author goes on to heighten the tension still further by having the king doubt the existence of the place where the treasure is supposed to be, so that Reynaert has once more to dispose of his doubts (2572–693). But in both cases the deception is carried out through Reynaert's verbal manipulation of his victims.

The confrontation between Reynaert and the king also illustrates a prominent feature of *Van den vos Reynaerde* – namely, that words regularly dominate reality; they transform the way in which reality is perceived. The royal couple's belief that Reynaert has actually made a promise to be loyal, when he has only said that he would be a fool not to make such a promise, is a case in point. The exchange of straws is a variation on this theme. The king's transfer of the straw to Reynaert, in token that his crimes and those of his father are forgiven, is in accordance with an existing legal ritual, the *festuatio*.¹³ But when Reynaert hands over another straw as a symbolic transfer of the treasure, the symbol has a particular appropriateness: since this particular treasure does not exist, it is suitably represented by a wisp of straw. The king does not notice that he is accepting Reynaert's words as a substitute for reality; for him, the straw is the treasure. The king's confusion of verbal fiction and reality is also evident in the ironic fact that he believes in the fictitious treasure, but doubts the existence of the factual place Kriekepit, where it is supposedly hidden (2630–5).

In summary, it may be said that a coherent narrative reality is created in *Van den vos Reynaerde*, mainly in the course of the conversations between the animals. These conversations reveal the cause-and-effect relations between events, and the motives of the characters involved in them. Reynaert is revealed as a persuader and manipulator of others. The author's comments help the audience to

discriminate truth from fiction. Although actions have an important role in the story (for example, when Reynaert traps Bruun by removing the wedges from the tree, or when he kills Kuwaert), they are dominated by words, which take the place of reality for Reynaert's victims. Yet the audience is always able to distinguish Reynaert's fictions from the true reality of the narrative.

As mentioned earlier, *Reynaerts historie* is a retelling and extension of *Van den vos Reynaerde*, so that the preceding analysis holds good for the first part of *Reynaerts historie*. However, in the second part of the story we find an entirely different literary technique. Here the dominating speech act is no longer dialogue but monologue. There are of course monologues in *Van den vos Reynaerde*, for example the brilliant speech delivered by Grimbeert in Reynaert's defence,¹⁴ or Reynaert's untruthful confession, but these monologues are always embedded in a larger dialogic context. In the second part of *Reynaerts historie*, dialogue is restricted to short transitions between monologues, the longest of which takes up 859 lines, or a full 11 per cent of the story.

The importance of monologue and the spoken word in the second part is also shown by the fact that the action is frozen for 2,500 lines (more than 30 per cent of the story). After Reynaert has returned to court, the only thing that happens is that two accusers leave in fear of their lives (4634-48), and that Reynaert's relatives come forward to lend him support (5180-210). The rest of this section is solely devoted to a report of the characters' words, and a large part of it is taken up by only three monologues. Such extensive dominance of monologue is not paralleled, to my knowledge, in any other medieval beast epic.

The monologues in *Reynaerts historie* are very long and complex, so that it is not possible to analyse them in the same detail as the episodes from *Van den vos Reynaerde*. I shall simply touch on a number of important themes: the relation between reality and language, the structure of the monologues and the type of lies they contain.

As we have already seen, the audience of *Van den vos Reynaerde* experiences a coherent narrative reality. Lies are told in the course of the story, but the audience can always identify them as such. In the second part of *Reynaerts historie*, this kind of narrative consistency disappears. The mendacious stories gain their own reality, sometimes transforming the narrative reality itself. When Reynaert

refutes the accusations made by Lapeel the rabbit and Scerpenebbe, the wife of Corbout the crow, he does so by repeating a fictitious conversation with his uncle Mertijn (the monkey) – who at this point in the story is equally fictitious as far as the audience is concerned (4368–631). In this conversation Mertijn is supposed to have said that Reynaert should ask Mertijn's wife Rukenau for help at court; she is wise and will gladly help a relative (4572–8). For all the audience knows, Rukenau is likewise a fictitious character. But when the king threatens to hang Reynaert for sending him Kuwaert's head, and Reynaert is at a loss for an answer, Rukenau intercedes and helps him. And before she starts to speak the author explains that she is well known to the court and a confidante of the queen. Fictitiousness here turns out to be narrative reality.

Jauss and Mann have pointed out a comparable technique in the *Ysengrimus*: it too provides the reader with information only at the last minute, and discloses its meaning only retrospectively.¹⁵ Reinardus also anticipates occurrences of which, properly speaking, he can have no foreknowledge (as when he acquires a wolf's head with which he will frighten Ysengrimus before the latter has arrived on the scene). This technique resembles the situation in *Reynaerts historie*, but here it is the past rather than the future which is in question. Rukenau's story of the man and the snake (4861–5045), for example, or Reynaert's stories of the dividing of the booty (5919–6039) and the sick lion (6040–138), give the audience new information about the past of the narrational reality.¹⁶ This information is never contradicted and has an inner coherence. In this way it becomes a part of the narrative reality – which in its turn has a more rhetorical foundation than that of *Van den vos Reynaerde*; Reynaert's words are its sole guarantee.

Even the longest and most brilliant monologues in *Van den vos Reynaerde* are relatively simple and unified in structure. In *Reynaerts historie* the situation is entirely different: the speeches are far longer, more complex, and far less clearly concentrated on one subject. When Rukenau comes to Reynaert's rescue, for example, she begins with a number of *sententiae* on fair judgement, the need for a cool head and impartiality.¹⁷ She goes on to demonstrate her qualifications for speaking, and then continues with reflections on the judging of other people's mistakes. Everyone is a sinner; those who remember that will not trouble Reynaert, for someone who sins will perhaps amend himself, and the good do not judge. These views are

supported by biblical quotations and allusions.¹⁸ Rukenuau thus introduces moral doctrines into a judicial context, and on these false grounds she pleads against any charge. Next, she alleges that Reynaert is better than Bruun and Ysegrim, because he is cleverer and once enjoyed better standing at court; she is now using social rather than moral criteria. She is in fact blurring things by distracting attention from the matter in hand. The case against Reynaert is of a legal nature: he has committed a crime against the state – that is, he has not shown himself a loyal servant of the king. By bringing in religious and moral values Rukenuau complicates the situation, and when she praises Reynaert she simply reverses the image of the fox presented to the king without any supporting evidence.

The king interrupts her. She is saying the oddest things. Surely everyone knows that Reynaert is evil, and nobody supports him? That is why he deserves to die. Rukenuau reacts to both points. She cites the story of the man and the snake as a case in which Reynaert did the king a favour. Then she calls upon Reynaert's kin to support him, which they do, although more from fear of Rukenuau than from love of Reynaert (5190–5).

Rukenuau's speech is complicated because it is so extensive. The story of the man and the snake alone takes up 182 lines, and 75 are devoted to the description of Rukenuau's children and their way of life.¹⁹ Moreover, although she tells the story of the man and the snake in the past tense, she makes liberal use of direct speech, in the manner of the second part of *Reynaerts historie* as a whole, so that it acquires an independent narrative reality.²⁰ The effect of these stylistic techniques is that the speech as a whole gives a miscellaneous, disorganized impression: Rukenuau seems to be talking about all kinds of things. Only on closer inspection does it appear that she is pursuing only one theme, namely Reynaert's usefulness as a servant of the king. The story of the man and the snake is designed to show how the king can profit from Reynaert's advice; the appeal to Reynaert's kin is designed to show that the fox can muster some formidable supporters, but that they wish to be of use to the king. Rukenuau is in effect arguing that the king should not kill Reynaert out of anger, but make use of him. Would justice then be served? According to her, it would.

Thus it becomes clear that the audience finds it more difficult to place the monologues in *Reynaerts historie* in relation to the narrative reality than it does in understanding the relation between dialogue

and narrative reality in *Van den vos Reynaerde*. This is because the untruth of the words in *Reynaerts historie* can no longer be ascertained by reference to the narrative reality. In *Van den vos Reynaerde* the lies often concern a reality which the audience has witnessed for itself. In other cases it hears Reynaert say two different things about one and the same event. The mutilations of Bruun and Tybeert offer clear examples of this. Reynaert engineers both, as the narrative makes clear, and in his confession to Grimbeert he takes responsibility for his actions (1463–6). He also accepts responsibility for the crimes of which Cantecleer accuses him, confirming the accuracy of the cock's complaint at the opening of the story. But once Reynaert has arrived at court and the king accuses him of having inflicted these injuries on Bruun and Tybeert, he denies all responsibility and protests his innocence (1820–32). The audience knows by what has gone before that Reynaert is lying here. The author's point is precisely to show how the animals at court react to Reynaert's lies.

In the second part of *Reynaerts historie*, this sort of recapitulation does not occur. The lies become autonomous and to a large degree begin to determine the narrative reality. The battle in this part is a battle for the interpretation of reality, which is never independently represented. Opponents are no longer combatted by manipulating their idea of reality, but by replacing their idea of reality with an alternative version.²¹ Thus the accusation that Reynaert devoured Scerpenebbe, the wife of Corbout the crow (3561–608), is refuted by the statement that she had eaten so much from a corpse that she burst. In any case, how could Reynaert have been able to eat her? She can fly and he cannot (4488–502).²² When Ysegrim says that Reynaert raped his wife when her tail was frozen in ice, Reynaert replies that he was trying to help her by pulling her free (6264–98, 6355–69).

A natural consequence of this battle for the 'true' interpretation of events is that in the second part of *Reynaerts historie* there is also a battle about who should or should not be given a hearing. In *Van den vos Reynaerde*, anyone who wishes to speak may do so, but not in *Reynaerts historie*. This becomes clear when Reynaert refutes the complaints of Lapeel the rabbit and Corbout the crow with such vigour and aggression that neither accuser dares to confront him and they quietly leave the court. They explain their behaviour as follows:

Hy [= Reynaert] can sijn loosheit cleden so wel
 Recht off ewangelien waren.
 Hier off en weet nyement twaren
 Dan wi, souden wijt dan betugen?
 Tis beter dat wi nygen ende bugen
 Dan wi dair tegen hem om vochten,
 Want wi ons niet verweren en mochten. (4640-6)

(Reynaert can put his slyness into such beautiful words that they seem like gospel truth. No one but us knows the truth. Should we then testify? It is better to give in than fight against him, for we should not be able to defend ourselves.)

If those who know the truth do not dare to speak it, daring to speak is itself enough to make one right.

Another case in which it appears that not everybody has an equal right to talk is the moment when Ysegrim accuses Reynaert in connection with the visit he and the fox paid to the monkey's cave. He allows Reynaert to retell the story, on condition that he tells the truth, because he admits that he could never tell the story in such a way that Reynaert could not find fault with it (6450-8). He admits, that is, that presentation is more important than what actually occurred. This is confirmed when Reynaert tells the story in such a way as to show himself in a good light and Ysegrim in a bad one. This makes the wolf so angry that he drops his accusation and challenges Reynaert to a duel instead. This suggests that words alone are not always sufficient to shape reality to one's will; sometimes violent action is necessary. But it turns out that Reynaert has no difficulty in dealing with that either. He is full of tricks: he is shaved bald and covered in oil. He throws sand in his opponent's eyes, he whips his urine-soaked tail into Ysegrim's eyes to blur his vision even further, and finally wins by battering the wolf's genitals.²³ It is clear that his behaviour is determined solely by the need to win; ethical standards have no place here. This throws retrospective light on the speeches as well; there too all possible means are used to force one's views on others, and all standards are abandoned.

We have seen that the presentation and nature of the lies in *Van den vos Reynaerde* and in *Reynaerts historie* are entirely different. What effect does this have on the audience reading both texts? The author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* informs his audience what the (narrative) reality is and shows how the views on this reality are manipulated

and changed by fictions and lies. Two effects are achieved by this mixture of narrative reality and lie. First, the events are given a certain concreteness. Second, the lie itself is less important than the social process in which it plays a part. The story shows that Reynaert's victims accept his lies because it is in their interests to do so. Their own greed tempts them to believe him. This relation between greed and lies is the central theme of *Van den vos Reynaerde*, and the audience is left to distil this theme from the concrete examples in which it is embodied and to see its relevance to real life. The relation between the narrative reality and the reality of the audience is an open one.

The author of *Reynaerts historie* is not satisfied with this message. He is not concerned with the reasons why the figures in the narrative allow a liar to manipulate them. His concern is to show the influence of lies and the degree to which liars and lies determine the society we live in. The power of lies is expressed by making the narrative reality subject to the reality of the lies constructed by the animals. The domination of lies and liars is shown in a number of ways. In the first place, the author's story is less concrete and more generalising and universalising. In *Van den vos Reynaerde*, Reynaert is the big liar and only in his absence does Grimbeert take his place. In *Reynaerts historie* we see that even Reynaert himself is speechless at one point. But then Rukenau comes to the rescue. There is always a master of lies present. Reality is always being manipulated, and if it is not by one person it is by another. We get the same feeling from the emphasis placed on the past of narrative reality: it suggests that what takes place in the narrative reality has always taken place. And that suggests that the future will be like that as well. The interpolated stories and the frequent generalizations reinforce the message:²⁴ this is how it always goes, not only in the narrative reality but also in the reality of the audience. In the epilogue the author spells out his message clearly: what Reynaert did at Nobel's court is constantly happening at human courts. Everybody is selfish, nobody is looking for the truth. That is why liars are in power (7666–704). Though *Reynaerts historie* is a complex story, its message is brought home to the audience far more intensely and less ambiguously.

There has been much animated discussion about the rise of medieval animal epic, but no one will deny that the *Ysengrimus* played a key role.²⁵ The *Ysengrimus* distinguishes itself in two respects from the preceding tradition of Latin beast fable. The first is that the

rudimentary narrative characteristic of the fable is extended to a whole epic world. The second is that the fable draws a moral from the gap between words and deeds, whereas in the *Ysengrimus* this gap becomes the basis of narrative development: the narrative shows how a purely verbal reality arises, and the reasons why the animals mask their behaviour and manipulate reality by rhetoric. Of all vernacular animal epics, *Van den vos Reynaerde* is the most consistent in its development of the first of these aspects. No other story shows so great an attempt to create not only an epic world but also in that world the most coherent narrative reality possible. And no story equals its brilliance in showing how greed leads to a split between words and deeds. In *Reynaerts historie* the second of these two aspects dominates. No other medieval animal epic reduces the narrative reality to merely verbal reality to so great an extent.²⁶ Is it a coincidence that both of these 'extreme' treatments of these two major aspects of the *Ysengrimus* were written in Middle Dutch?

When Bosworth said of the Dutch *Reynaert* story²⁷ 'if it were the only interesting and valuable work existing in Old Dutch, it alone would fully repay the trouble of learning the language',²⁸ he was making a critical evaluation which has been both endorsed and disputed. But for anyone who wishes to study the European medieval animal epic, his statement is absolutely correct.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. *Ysengrimus*, text with translation, commentary and introduction by J. Mann (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 58-77. J. Mann, 'The *Roman de Renart* and the *Ysengrimus*', in K. Varty, ed., *A la Recherche du Roman de Renart*, (New Alyth: Lochee Publications, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 135-62.
- 2 A diplomatic edition of the text is W. Gs. Hellinga, ed., *Van den vos reynaerde*, vol. 1: *Teksten, Diplomatisch uitgegeven naar de bronnen vóór het jaar 1500* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1952). For a critical edition, with commentary, see F. Lulofs, ed., *Van den vos Reynaerde* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1983). An English translation of the text can be found in E. Colledge, *Reynard the Fox*, pp. 55-157 (see appendix A). A summary of the text and a good, if dated, outline of the research done on it can be found in J. Flinn, *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au moyen âge* (Paris: PUF, 1963), pp. 598-657. A synopsis of the tale is also given in Th. W. Best, *Reynard the Fox* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), pp. 70-103. The opinions added to this retelling of the story are very personal. They also differ from the main views in Dutch scholarship and are often simply wrong.

- 3 See for the most recent discussion of the dating A. Bouwman, *Reinaert en Renart. Het dierenepos Van den vos Reynaerde vergeleken met de Oudfranse Roman de Renart* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 418–20.
- 4 For a diplomatic edition of the text, see Hellinga, ed., *Van den vos reynaerde*, MS B, or J. Goossens, ed., *Reynaerts Historie. Reynke de Vos*. Gegenüberstellung einer Auswahl aus den niederländischen Fassungen und des niederdeutschen Textes von 1498 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983). The most recent critical edition is E. Martin, ed., *Reinaert, Willems Gedicht Van den Vos Reinaerde und die Umarbeitung und Fortsetzung Reynaerts Historie* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1874)! There is no modern translation of the text in English, but Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* can be used to get a very clear idea of the story (not of the style or the wording) of *Reynaerts historie*. The most recent study of the text is P. Wackers, *De waarheid als leugen, een interpretatie van Reynaerts historie* (Utrecht: HES, 1986).
- 5 Cf. A. Berteloot, "'Waarom zouden wij aan Westvlaanderen denken, wanneer wij alles zo goed in Holland kunnen plaatszen?'" Rijmonderzoek in *Reynaerts historie*, in E. Cockx-Indestege and F. Hendrickx, eds., *Miscellanea neerlandica, opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag* (Louvain: Peeters, 1987), vol. II, pp. 389–99; A. Berteloot, 'Zur Datierung von "Reinaerts Historie"', in W. Brandt, ed., *Sprache in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1988), pp. 26–31.
- 6 The name of the wolf is spelled in various ways in the manuscripts. I have chosen a spelling in accordance with the majority of the manuscripts.
- 7 Cf. *Ysengrimus*, ed. Mann, pp. 59–69.
- 8 See also *Ysengrimus*, ed. Mann, pp. 69–77. Mann, 'Roman de Renart and *Ysengrimus*', 147–9.
- 9 K. Varty, 'Back to the beginnings of the *Romans de Renart*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 29 (1985), 44–72, and 'Les anthologies dans le *Roman de Renart*: le rôle de l'anthologiste–conteur dans la "matière de Renart"', in Varty, *A la Recherche du Roman de Renart*, pp. 51–77.
- 10 Cf. *Van den vos reynaerde*, ed. Lulofs, p. 216.
- 11 Cf. M. Roques, ed., *Le Roman de Renart, première branche, Jugement de Renart, Siège de Maupertuis, Renart teinturier* (Paris: Champion: 1975), pp. 18–19, lines 509–56. I refer to the edition of Roques, because the text of *Van den vos reynaerde* resembles that of Branch I in the version of the family β most. Cf. A. Bouwman, 'On the place of *Van den vos Reynaerde* in the Old French *Roman de Renart* tradition', *Reinardus* 3 (1990), 15–24.
- 12 This scene contains more pointers to the negative end of the Bruun episode, see lines 623–6 and 638–43.
- 13 Cf. *Van den vos reynaerde*, ed. Lulofs, pp. 271–2.
- 14 For an analysis of this speech, see E. Rombauts, 'Grimbeert's defense of Reinaert in *Van den vos reynaerde*. An example of *oratio iudicialis*?', in

- E. Rombauts and A. Welkenhuysen, eds., *Aspects of the Medieval Animal Epic* (Louvain University Press; The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 129-41.
- 15 H. R. Jauss, *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Tierdichtung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1959), pp. 101-3; *Ysengrimus*, ed. Mann, pp. 66-9.
 - 16 Cf. Wackers, *De waarheid als leugen*, pp. 104-5, 108-11.
 - 17 This part of this article discusses lines 4729-5247.
 - 18 Cf. Lk. 6:36-41; Mt. 7:1-3; Jn 8:1-11.
 - 19 To make a comparison in *Van den vos reynaerde*: Grimbeert's defence of Reynaert is 76 lines long, Reynaert's public confession 73 and Reynaert's tale about the treasure 251.
 - 20 This principle is used doubly in Reynaert's speech on his meeting with Mertijn the monkey. In this speech he retells his conversation with Mertijn, in which he had retold his conversations with Lapeel and Corbout. He also presents the past of the past as the present. Cf. Wackers, *De waarheid als leugen*, pp. 127-32; J. Goossens, 'Reynaerts und Reynkes Begegnung mit dem Affen Marten', *Niederdeutsches Wort* 20 (1980), 73-84.
 - 21 This also happens in *Van den vos reynaerde* (see e.g. 234-62, 1821-32), but there it is a far less dominant aspect of the presentation of the story.
 - 22 Corbout's complaint has explained how this could happen (3565-84). However, he does not dare to persist in his complaint; see below.
 - 23 Quotation and analysis in P. Wackers, 'Mutorum animalium conloquium, or, Why do animals speak?', *Reinardus* 1 (1988), 163-74, esp. 168-9.
 - 24 On the embedded stories, see P. Wackers, 'The Use of Fables in *Reinaerts historie*', in J. Goossens and T. Sodmann, eds., *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium, Münster 1979, Proceedings* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1981), pp. 461-83; on the *sententiae* and gnostic utterances: Wackers, 'Mutorum animalium conloquium'.
 - 25 Mann, '*Roman de Renart* and *Ysengrimus*'.
 - 26 There are more similarities between *Reynaerts historie* and the *Ysengrimus* than are analysed here: for example, the frequent use of gnostic utterances, the theme of wisdom versus folly, the theme of greed and the striving after gain. No proof exists for a direct relation between both texts, but the similarities are very intriguing.
 - 27 In his time the difference between *Van den vos reynaerde* and *Reynaerts historie* was not yet clearly grasped.
 - 28 The citation is taken from R. van Daele, 'Quelques aspects de la réception renardienne en Flandre aux dix-neuvième et vingtième siècles', *Reinardus* 3 (1990), 173-83, esp. 183.

PART IV

The literature of love

CHAPTER 9

Dirc Potter, a medieval Ovid

A. M. J. van Buuren

GOWER, CHAUCER AND THE MEDIEVAL OVID

In the medieval schools the works of Ovid were continuously read and reread and commented upon.¹ If one turns up one of the hundreds of medieval Ovid manuscripts one can be pretty sure that more will show itself than the bare texts of the *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides*, *Ars Amatoria* or *Remedia Amoris*.² The codices are teeming with interlinear and marginal glosses and scholia: short elucidations, explanations of a word, further explications, at times detailed comments. More than once the leaves are filled to the brim with explanatory notes, and if a manuscript is chosen and opened at random there is every chance that an introduction will be found preceding the work, an *accessus ad auctorem*.³

In most cases medieval authors, when writing in the vernacular and adapting Ovidian material, have undoubtedly drawn directly on their knowledge of the texts-with-glosses. It is an established fact that for his *Confessio Amantis*⁴ John Gower used, among other things, the 'medieval Ovid';⁵ the same goes for Chaucer with respect to his *Legend of Good Women*.⁶ It is also well known that they do not translate the classical examples unthinkingly. For instance, if Gower or Chaucer take up the *Heroides* for the *Confessio* or *Legend*, they refashion the Ovidian letters into narratives; as a result the setting will be entirely different from the original one. Moreover, details are left out while other things are added that are not found in the *Heroides* but are found, for example, in the medieval commentaries or in the *accessus*.

However, there is more. Usually an *accessus ad auctorem* examines some six points: (1) the life of the author (*vita auctoris*); (2) the title of the work (*titulus operis*); (3) the intention of the author (*intentio auctoris*); (4) the subject matter of the work (*materia operis*); (5) its use

(*utilitas* or *causa finalis*); (6) the question to which part of philosophy the work should be assigned (*cui parti philosophiae supponatur*). What the *accessus* and the commentaries aim at providing are information on and understanding of the work. I will consider here only the question of the *intentio auctoris* as posed in the *Accessus ad Heroides*. Although the answer that medieval commentators give to this question is not always the same,⁷ it usually comes down to roughly this: 'Intentio sua commendare quasdam a licito amore . . ., alias reprehendere ab illicito . . ., alias etiam reprehendere a stulto amore' (to commend some of them [= the women writers of the epistles] for their licit love . . ., to reprehend some others for their illicit love . . ., to reprehend still others for their foolish love).⁸

In his article of 1980 A. J. Minnis approaches a question concerning the *accessus* in a most interesting manner. He demonstrates that the 'moral frame' of the *Confessio* 'was [certainly] derived from scholastic literary theory, in particular from commentaries on Ovid' (p. 207). Gower puts the '*materia* of love in a moral perspective' (p. 211), just as the medieval commentators of the *Heroides* do: these letters are examples of either *amor licitus* or *amor stultus* or *amor illicitus*. From the latter two one can learn what not to do in matters of love, and in the same way one can find out from the examples of *amor licitus* how to behave properly. But, Minnis says, Gower's original achievement is that 'he widened the moral perspective which he found in the "Mediaeval Ovid"' (p. 211). Minnis shows this on the basis of, among others, *Phyllis and Demophon*.

In the Middle Ages the story of the unhappy love between the Thracian queen and the Greek hero was known principally from the second letter of the *Heroides*⁹ and from a short passage in the *Remedia Amoris*.¹⁰ In the Ovid commentaries Phyllis' love is considered an example of *amor stultus*.¹¹ She gave herself to someone who was unknown (*ignotus*) to her, to a *hospes*, a stranger, 'stulticia enim est amare hospites sicut phillis' (for it is foolish to love strangers as Phyllis [did]).¹²

Gower has the story of *Phyllis and Demophon* told by the father confessor Genius as a 'gret ensample' (iv.728) of *oblivio* (forgetfulness), one of the subtypes of *acedia* (sloth) (iv.731-878). Minnis shows that 'Gower re-directs the story by expanding that part of it which was not the concern of the commentators, and preserves intact their moral points. The fact that Phyllis' love is foolish makes Demophon the more reprehensible' (p. 212). There can be no doubt

that Phyllis' love in the *Confessio* is looked upon as *amor stultus*. When Demophon does not return, Phyllis falls into *intemperantia* (intemperance). She writes to him and implores him to come back:

Sche seith, that if he lengere lette
Of such a day as sche him sette,
Sche scholde sterven in his Slowthe,
Which were a shame unto his trowthe. (iv.795-8)

But he does not come. She looks out over the sea, places a lantern 'on hih alofte / Upon a Tour' (iv.817-18) – a reference to the story of *Hero and Leander* – 'Bot al for noght, sche was deceived' (iv.823). In the end she hangs herself in despair: *amor stultus*.¹³ She changes into a 'Notetree' (iv.867). The name 'Phillibert' (filbert), the narrator tells us, has been derived from 'Phyllis'.¹⁴ When Demophon learns what has happened 'He gan his slowthe forto banne, / Bot it was al to late thanne' (iv.877-8). What is interesting in Gower's tale is that he leaves the 'moral frame' intact but deflects the narrative to Demophon: Genius censures the Greek's behaviour, who in his forgetfulness commits the sin of *acedia* and sees his error too late, while yet, in spite of the fact that it is not explicitly mentioned, Phyllis' *amor stultus* has not disappeared from the story. A medieval author like Gower adapts familiar material and makes it fit his purpose.

This can also be said of Chaucer, but matters are rather different in the *Legend of Good Women*. Its interpretation has been the subject of heated discussions and it seems unlikely that a consensus has been reached: is it a good or a bad poem; should it be taken seriously or ironically; is it complete or not; what in fact is it about?¹⁵ Passing over all these issues I will concentrate on one point.

Chaucer, too, knew the Ovid commentaries and possibly even an Italian translation of the *Heroides*.¹⁶ In the article mentioned above, Minnis says with respect to the *Legend* that in his opinion the *Heroides* 'may be considered as a source not only for many of Chaucer's individual legends but also for the literary form or structure (what commentators called the *forma*) of his work, [but] he did not follow Ovid's precedent for the way in which (according to the mediaeval commentators) diverse *materiae* were juxtaposed within that *forma*' (p. 209). Chaucer is concerned with *good* women only. But why does he include stories about the kind of love that in the *Heroides* commentaries is designated as 'foolish', like, for instance, those of *Ariadne and Theseus*, *Dido and Aeneas* or *Phyllis and Demophon*?

In this connection Minnis discusses again the latter (pp. 213-14). He is of the opinion that Chaucer wants to portray Phyllis as 'one of love's martyrs' (p. 213).¹⁷ It is not Chaucer's purpose to show us the foolishness of Phyllis' love, but the contrast between Demophon's faithlessness and Phyllis' honour. That is why he curtails her letter:

But al hire letter wryten I ne may
By order, for it were to me a charge;
Hire letter was ryght long and therto large. (2513-15)

In fact Chaucer leaves out everything that Phyllis writes about her grief, her anguished but vain yearning. What matters is that she is filled with despair: 'She for dispeyr fordidde hyreself' (2567). 'For Chaucer', Minnis says, 'the story does not pertain to ethics as the commentators understood the term, but to what might be called "the ethics of love"' (p. 213).

Both Gower and Chaucer knew the *Heroides* and the medieval commentaries and used them. But the way in which they did so is quite different because their aims are so different. Both works are about love, but Gower is, in the words of C. David Benson, 'educating his readers in the dangers of excessive, non-rational passion'.¹⁸ To match the 'real' saints' lives Chaucer, in his *Legend of Good Women*, provides 'the Seintes Legende of Cupide', as the Introduction to the *Man of Law's Tale* has it (61).¹⁹ Here – ironically or not – the saints, the martyrs of faithful love, are presented to the reader.²⁰ Stories like that of *Phyllis and Demophon* fit Chaucer's as well as Gower's purpose; it is simply a matter of adaptation.

DIRC POTTER AND THE MEDIEVAL OVID

At a court in the later Middle Ages a civil servant and diplomat is employed who in his spare time writes works of literature. One of these is the *Mellibeus*; another goes back to the Italian *Fiore di virtù*; his principal work, finally, is a treatise in verse about love, by way of illustration larded with stories which are largely taken from Ovid, in particular from his *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*.

It is not unlikely that an English reader is here led to think of an author who is a mixture of Chaucer and Gower. The civil servant/diplomat/writer calls to mind Chaucer, as do the *Mellibeus* and the Italian background to a certain work. And as to his *pièce de résistance*: Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* provide obvious parallels.

The author who is the subject of this paper is Dirc Potter, a near-contemporary of the two Englishmen (c. 1370 – 30 April 1428). After he had finished the Latin School he entered the service of the count of Holland in about 1385. He continued to be employed by the court until his death. Having started as a treasury clerk, he was, after 1400, promoted to clerk of the court of justice, bailiff of The Hague and, eventually, secretary of the count. As a diplomat he went on a number of journeys. Thus a secret mission took him to Rome between February 1411 and May 1412. In 1413 he led a delegation to England to negotiate on the problems caused by the privateering of ships from Holland. In 1416 he travelled to Calais.

The oldest of Potter's three works is the treatise on love, *Der minnen loep* (*The Course of Love*, 1411–12). The other two are discourses in prose: *Blome der doechden* (*Flowers of Virtue*) and *Van Mellibee ende van sinre vrouwen Prudencia* (*On Mellibeus and his Wife Prudentia*), both written after March 1415. The former of these is a direct, or possibly indirect, adaptation of the well-known Italian *Fiore di virtù*, the latter goes back, via the French translation by Renaud de Louens, to Albertanus of Brescia.²¹

This contribution is limited to an exposition of *Der minnen loep*. This work's great interest comes from the peculiar circumstance of its being an *ars amandi*, a collection of stories and a witness of school influence. The combination of these three factors and, in addition, the narrative talent of the author, makes it unique in the medieval literature of western Europe.

Der minnen loep consists of four books, together amounting to over 11,000 lines of verse.²² The narrator recounts how, walking along the Tiber, he has a vision in which Lady Venus appears to him. She commands him to write about love and relate love stories. When she has disappeared the narrator begins to think about all those who have written about love: Gallus, Ovid, Anacreon, Coris, Callimachus, Tibullus, Sappho and many others. He decides to carry out Venus' assignment and to the best of his ability explain to young people what love is, even though he himself sees love as a burden. After having explained that there are many kinds of love he states that he will limit himself to the love between two people, the love that has broken many a heart. With real love, he says, two hearts become completely one. It can give much sorrow, but in the end rewards with joy. But in the case of discord, or if one of them takes someone else, then that can cause the death of the other partner. In order to make it clear that it is better to restrain one's passion and to

love in a rational way he proceeds to tell the story of *Phyllis and Demophon* (1.325-453). This is the first of some sixty tales which throughout the work serve to illustrate the 'theory'. Only after he has finished the story of *Phyllis and Demophon* and once more pointed out that one should love 'wisely', does he explain that the love of these two ought to be marked as 'foolish' love. Beside this he distinguishes 'licit, good and illicit' love (1.527). And it is not until the end of Book I (3257-82) that the reader learns the structure of the entire work: this first book has dealt with 'foolish' love; Books II, III and IV will examine 'good', 'illicit' and 'licit' love.

These four types of love are nowhere defined. The reader must conclude for himself what the narrator means by them from the argument. In brief they come down to the following. The 'foolish' love of the first book is characterized by, among other things, too great a hurry: one should first be convinced that the decision to enter into a love affair was the right one. Hence it was injudicious of Phyllis to get involved with the stranger Demophon without first having checked his antecedents. Something similar can be said of the relationships in stories like those of *Medea and Jason* (1.552-722), or *Dido and Aeneas* (1.1023-148). In all these cases, and many still to be told,²³ the protagonists' course of action is injudicious, rash and ill-considered.

The way in which the narrator of *Der minnen loep* builds up his treatise is essentially the same in all four books: the theoretical expositions, exhortations, admonitions and advice are continuously elucidated and enlivened by means of tales.

In the second book he deals with 'good' love, by which he understands the love between two unmarried people. This he divides into four steps or stages. At the first stage, during which the lovers are in the company of others, affection develops; they look at each other, but do not let on to anyone else. At the second stage they meet *à deux*, in the garden: they converse and exchange sweet nothings. At the third stage they have intimate physical contact, upstairs: they embrace, caress and kiss, but stop short of coitus. This is the privilege of the married and may only take place at the fourth stage. This fourth stage of the 'good' love is that of the 'licit' love, which is dealt with separately in Book IV. To all four stages a virtue belongs which, as it were, is a prerequisite of the stage reached: *mate* (*temperantia*), *wijsheit* (*sapientia*), *starcheit* (*fortitudo*) and *rechtveerdicheit* (*iustitia*). These four cardinal virtues are presented as personifi-

cations. They are dressed in symbolic colours, green, white, red and blue respectively. One of the things emphasized by the narrator in this second book is that force and violence may play no part in love. On the other hand it is permitted to use craft to win one's beloved in a clever way. Much attention is given to the problem of 'honour' and 'shame': one should always see to it that honour – that is, one's outward reputation – is preserved, for worse than shame there is nothing. Furthermore the narrator points out that a reliable friend is indispensable. At the end of Book II he calls on women not to shirk love and to impress his lessons on their minds. Love, he concludes, overcomes all, but 'Goeds minne gaet boven al' (God's love surpasses all; II.4268). This second book is again full of exemplifying stories, for example about *Adonis* [= *Hero*] and *Leander* (II.119–394), *The Chatelaine of Vergi* (II.430–608), and many another.²⁴

The third book is about 'illicit' love: homosexuality, bestiality, incest, rape and the love of Jews or pagans. It numbers a mere 1,264 lines. Illustrative stories are, among others, *Pasiphae and the Bull* (III.168–232), and *Phaedra and Hippolytus* (III.443–552). Most of the interest in this book is centred on incest (over 700 lines), and here, too, the rule applies that one should beware of shame and heed the backbiters who are always on the look-out.

The last book of *Der minnen loep* deals with 'licit' love, that is, the fourth stage of 'good' love: marriage. The narrator defends marriage *vis-à-vis* monastic life, he praises the freedom provided by marriage in that nothing needs to be kept a secret now and the fear of gossip has disappeared. Fidelity in marriage he values above all and he emphatically rejects unfaithfulness. The wife should serve her husband, but the latter has his duties too. Nevertheless it is especially the women who are admonished to show proper wifely behaviour. Two dangers in particular they must avoid: they should not believe all that is rumoured about their husbands and they should not watch their husbands' movements. A good wife is beyond all praise. Let her emulate her sisters from the past and let her behave as is right and proper. In addition the fourth book is not without its illustrations of the 'theory', instances of fidelity and unfaithfulness, of affection and deceit: *Clytaemnestra*, *Agamemnon* and *Aegisthus* (IV.249–64 and 452–78), *Jason*, *Medea* and *Creusa* (IV.495–584), etc.²⁵

The above is no more than a rough survey. It by no means shows what Potter really does. However, it should be clear that in this

verse treatise he expounds an art of love in which he emphatically sides with marriage. The four books are contrasted two by two: the 'foolish' love of Book I is set against the 'good' love of II, and the 'illicit' love of III against the 'licit' of IV, while at the same time I runs parallel to III and II to IV – the 'licit' love of Book IV actually constitutes the highest of the four stages of the 'good' love of II. Beside this it is obvious that the author never grows tired of relating stories to illustrate his teachings, in good medieval fashion, with *exempla*. 'Theory' and 'practice' balance each other nicely: each of them takes up some 5,500 lines. But all this does not say much about the underlying idea, the adaptation procedure, or the backgrounds. In what follows the first two of these aspects of the work will be briefly discussed and, in the case of the second, illustrated by means of a few examples.

The reader cannot but have noticed that Potter, like Chaucer and Gower, knew the 'medieval Ovid'. It is obvious that he derived the classification according to kinds of love in Books I, III and IV from the *Heroides* commentaries. This is confirmed by the fact that the examples from the *Heroides* which in the commentaries are indicated as *amor stultus*, are found in Potter's Book I, whereas the examples of *amor illicitus* and *amor licitus* from the *Heroides* were adapted for Books III and IV respectively.²⁶

As to the 'good' love of Book II, it can first of all be said that this does not originate in the *Heroides* commentaries. Still, from Potter's viewpoint as expressed in *Der minnen loep*, it forms a whole with 'licit' love, which constitutes its highest degree. Apparently Potter has, as it were, split up his 'good' love into two parts. He wrote his work, as he says himself, to teach young people what love is, taking marriage as his ultimate goal. But within his Christian view he also wanted to pay attention to the awakening love of young people, to premarital love. To this end he once more turned to the classics. From Classical Antiquity onwards and throughout the entire Middle Ages we see the *topos* of the *quinque lineae amoris* turn up time and again: from the seeing (*visus*) via the conversation (*allocutio*), the touch (*tactus*) and the kiss (*osculum*) to the deed (*factum*).²⁷ There are many variations on the theme but the pattern is always the same. One of these variations is the division into four stages, as for instance with Andreas Capellanus and Baudouin de Condé.²⁸ From the summary of *Der minnen loep* given above it is evident that Potter has used this well-known pattern to structure his 'good' love in four stages, but

adapted it to his views on the 'course of love', his *cursus amoris*, views which in essence correspond to those of the Church on the subject of love and marriage.

It appears then that in *Der minnen loep* Potter has first and foremost made use of Ovid's *Heroides* and of the medieval *accessus* to and commentaries on these fictitious letters. It is equally demonstrable that he knew and used both the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris* and the commentaries on them.²⁹ In veiled terms he even presents himself as the new Ovid. This he does as follows. When in Book I the narrator, after Venus' assignment, starts thinking about those who have written about love he mentions the names of Gallus, Ovid, Appellex, Anacreon, Coris, Callimachus, Tibullus, 'Arathij's' and Sappho (I.148-58; cf. above). Comparison with lines 329-40 of Book III of the *Ars amatoria* (or with lines 758-66 of the *Remedia amoris*) brings to light a remarkable parallel. In the *Ars amatoria*, in the passage indicated, the reader is strongly advised to familiarize him- or herself with the great poets of the past – practically all of them love poets: Callimachus, Coris, Anacreon, Sappho, Menander, Propertius, Gallus, Tibullus, Varro and Virgil.³⁰ Ovid's and Potter's lists are not identical, but the correspondence is close enough to speak of a conscious borrowing. After having referred to all these famous predecessors Ovid, however tentatively, adds his own name to the list: 'Perhaps too my name will be joined to theirs, nor will my writings be given to Lethe's waters' (III.339-40). Potter, in turn, includes Ovid's name in his series of those great poets who 'vele van minne gheweten hebben' (have known much of love; I.154), but by means of his decision to carry out Venus' assignment, and because of the context (with its implied reference to the *Ars amatoria*) in which this decision is presented, he makes himself, as it were, the successor of the Roman author, a new Ovid.

However, and this is what is so interesting about it, he subsequently does not follow Ovid but the commentaries, and from his accumulated knowledge he creates an entirely new, Christian-based *ars amandi*. Just like Gower and Chaucer, he uses the material at his disposal, and like them he does it in his own way. In his working method he is closer to Gower – the 'moral' frame is quite distinct – than to Chaucer, and closer to the commentators than either of these, but for twentieth-century readers it is especially surprising to see how strong the influence of the school could be, both in England

and on the Continent, and how strong the influence of the texts of the school curriculum, of the *accessus* and of the accompanying commentaries.

It would be fascinating to compare and contrast the Ovidian stories from the *Heroides* occurring both in Gower and Chaucer and in Potter, and to analyse them carefully (taking into account their contexts as well) in order to bring out the correspondences and differences, and to draw conclusions as to the difference in adaptation procedures. But I will limit myself to the story already dealt with above, that of *Phyllis and Demophon*, and compare it with Ovid, with an occasional glance at Gower and Chaucer.

Let us begin with a few observations.

In the first place: when comparing *Der minnen loep* with Ovid we easily establish a number of differences. Some of these demonstrably go back to the commentaries. To give an example: in *Der minnen loep* it is said of Demophon that he arrived at the court of Phyllis 'when Troy had been destroyed' (1.334). This is not in the *Heroides*, but it is found, for example, in the introduction to the second letter in a manuscript in Leiden University Library: 'Demophon . . . qui cum a bello Troiano reuertetur . . .' (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek MS B.P.L. 163, f. 3r).

Secondly: it appears that Potter medievalizes. Phyllis is courtly, benign and good (1.329), and kindly receives Demophon – who is referred to as 'knight' (1.351) – at her court, which was splendid and highly praised (1.344–6). Potter also noticeably emphasizes Phyllis' courtly behaviour.

Thirdly: Potter clearly has an eye for the mutuality of the relationship. The two look at each other lovingly (1.348–50), they become one 'van herte ende sinne' (of heart and mind; 1.355), they swear loyalty to each other (1.371–2). In her letter in the *Heroides* Phyllis only mentions the solemn oaths sworn by Demophon (11.31–44).

Fourthly: in the *Heroides* Phyllis devotes a considerable number of lines to Demophon's father, the great hero Theseus, whom he takes after only in his infidelity (11.67–78). Potter merely mentions that 'Theseus, king of Athens', was Demophon's father (1.360–1), and that Demophon left Phyllis 'to visit his father' (1.384).

Lastly: in *Der minnen loep* the audience is informed that at home, in Athens, Demophon has entered into a new affair and never thought again of Phyllis, after which Potter makes the following moralizing

and yet rather laconic comment: 'As happens quite frequently nowadays' (1.401). A few lines down it is repeated that Demophon has forgotten all about returning (1.406), and, finally, in 1.428-9 Phyllis says: 'And Demophon, I hear, has a new love'. In the *Heroides* it is no more than implied that Demophon has another partner, 'altera coniunx', and has forgotten her (11.103-5).

Like Chaucer and Gower, Potter has reshaped the letter from the *Heroides* into a narrative, even to the extent that any reference to a letter has disappeared in his poem. The narrator has her walk along the sea (cf. *Heroides* 11.121-2), and tells us that she thought her heart would break and that she could hardly speak (1.409-12). Next he has her make her complaint – in a splendid and highly poetic passage – in direct speech (1.415-47). For the most part this does go back to Phyllis' letter, but there are some new elements as well; most important, however, is that its structure is entirely different. The narrator has Phyllis call out to Demophon with a loud 'O', six times repeated, followed by the reproach that he ought to be ashamed before the gods because of his perjury. The oaths which, according to the *Heroides* (11.31-44), Demophon had sworn by Hymenaeus, by the sea and by Neptune, by Venus, by Juno and by Demeter, Potter transforms into high-desperate supplications uttered by Phyllis:

O Pallas, Jupiter ende Meynerve,
 Juno, Venus ende Dyane!
 Vierwarff is die lichte mane
 Hair ghecomen ende ghegaen,
 Ende Demofon, heb ic verstaen,
 Is mit nuwer liefte ghecleyt.
 Dat brinctmi in een sterflic leyt. (1.424-30)

(O Pallas, Jupiter and Minerva, Juno, Venus and Diana! Four times the light moon has arrived and left again, and Demophon, I have heard, has adorned himself with a new love. That gives me deadly sorrow.)

Thereupon Phyllis directly addresses her maidservants (cf. *Heroides* 11.130) – or her fellow-sufferers in love; which of these she means is not clear (1.431-5). She says that she sees many ships, but not that of Demophon (1.436-7; cf. *Heroides* 11.125-8); she laments her fate, makes another appeal to the perjured Demophon and confesses to him her undiminished and fervent love (1.438-40). She then concludes: 'You don't want to come to me; hence I must cross the sea to you' (1.441-2; cf. *Heroides* 11.131-8). After one more self-complaint

(in vain, as she herself observes) she ends with this final cry of despair:

Adieu mijn stadt, vrund ende maghe!
Die liefte brecht mijn herte ontwee. (1.446-7)

(Adieu my city, friends and relatives! Love breaks my heart in two.)

Then, the narrator tells us, she jumped into the sea and drowned. All went into deep mourning.

The way in which Potter has the narrator recount the story of *Phyllis and Demophon* is characteristic of his working method. His overall concern is the theory of his Christian *ars amandi*, and the explanatory stories must indeed endorse that. On the other hand they must also *as stories* be captivating and coherent. As he had drawn *Der minnen loep's* basic structure primarily from the ideas incorporated in the *Heroides* commentaries it was only natural that to illustrate a case in point he would first of all make use of the *Heroides* itself. However, the perspective of the female authors of the letters in the *Heroides* is entirely different from that of the narrator who tells *about* them, and about their addressees and their tribulations. The narrator can introduce speakers or present their thoughts directly – which enlivens the story – but he may also choose to provide the information himself. For instance, he can inform us that Demophon has started a new affair (1.398), while he has Phyllis say, a few lines down: ‘And Demophon, I hear, has a new love’ (1.428-9). He will continuously have to bear in mind that the story is clear to his audience; where necessary he will have to provide background information about persons and circumstances: who actually were Phyllis and Demophon; where, when and how did they meet; what happened?

There is of course nothing remarkable about this. Nor is it a surprise that the stories are medievalized: the knight Demophon and the gracious queen Phyllis at her splendid court. How Potter really set to work we only see when we look more closely.

Whatever is irrelevant he leaves out. The long and agonizing lament of Phyllis' letter has been cut back to a matter-of-fact account. There is just the penetrating monologue at the end (1.415-47), in which Phyllis expresses her emotions. All her deliberations about committing suicide are reduced to one plan, which is immediately carried out: Phyllis, the narrator says, drowned, and there was deep mourning. Potter here deviates from medieval tradi-

tion, which declares that she hanged herself. But why did Potter do that? Because Phyllis herself offers this suggestion in her letter. She dwells longest on death by drowning (*Heroides* II.131–8), and says: ‘et quoniam fallere pergis, erit’ (and because you continue to deceive me, that will happen). In addition to that she had previously related how she hurries to the water whenever she sees a ship approaching (*Heroides* II.125–8), while in the *Remedia amoris* this ‘attraction of the water’ is hinted at as well (595–602). In *Der minnen loep* there are no deliberations; the text is brief and to the point. It is then rounded off with the announcement of the mourning over Phyllis. One might call this the ‘concentration technique’. What matters is that the Phyllis–Demophon relation is exposed as *amor stultus*, and that within the framework devised by Potter for *Der minnen loep*. In the prologue the narrator says that there are many kinds of love, but that he wants to restrict himself to the love between two people (I.221–52). Moreover, in his opinion love is not meant for ‘Arme luden’ (poor people; I.220), who have to work for a living, but exclusively for ‘Ledighe luden’ (idle people; I.215), people without material worries. This latter consideration explains why, in a story like *Phyllis and Demophon*, Potter stresses the fact that Phyllis was a queen, that her court was magnificent and that she behaved in true courtly fashion, and also that Demophon was a king’s son and a gentle knight. And because his interest is in the love between two people he emphasizes the mutuality of their relationship (I.348–76): *amor* is what it is all about. But in the same passage he clearly reveals the passionate nature of the relation – which is based on nothing but *visus*, sight:

Die vrouwe sach den groten here
 Mit minnentlike oghen an.
 So dede oick die edel man.
 Dat gheschut van sidders oghen
 Bracht die vrouwe in lieflic doghen.
 Die bant wort daer al duen ghewrongen. (I.348–53)

(The lady looked at the gentle lord with a loving eye – as did this noble man. The arrow [of love] from the eyes of the knight made the lady suffer the pain of love. The bond was closely knit there.)

The lovers did not check each other’s background. It is just love at first sight, rashness, injudicious behaviour, in short: *amor stultus*. It is a ‘foolish’ love, but so steadfast on the part of Phyllis that it goes

beyond the bounds of death. That is why she drowns herself, for then her body can float to his distant coast:

O Demofon, meynedich vorst,
 Hoe sere mi na dijn liefde dorst,
 Du en wils niet comen hier tot mi:
 Ic moet over die zee tot di. (1.439-42)

(O Demophon, perjured prince, how I thirst for your love. You do not want to come to me, [so] across the sea I must come to you.)

The entire story is geared to pointing out how passionate, precipitate and ill-considered the affair is as well as how thoroughly faithful the attitude of Phyllis. This fidelity – which is bound to arouse the sympathy of the audience – makes the story all the more poignant, as it does not diminish the ‘foolishness’ of their love; indeed it rather underlines it.

In the story’s concluding moralization (1.454-70) the narrator stresses that one ought to ‘wiselic minnen’ (1.455: *sapienter amare*, love wisely), practise patience, lest one becomes filled with despair leading to drastic action and the loss of one’s soul. *Stulte amare* is the opposite of *sapienter amare*, a notion used by Phyllis herself in the *Heroides* (II.27; cf. *Ars amatoria* II.511), and one that is explicitly dealt with in the commentaries.³¹

The story of *Phyllis and Demophon* is an example of Potter’s working method. Many more could have been added, and time and again it would appear that the way in which he treats his subject in order to realize his aims is extremely independent and varied. He condenses and reduces, but never leaves a loose end. He shifts the emphasis where necessary or even radically changes the text. One more example. In Book II the well-known story of Susanna and the Elders (II.2477-584) is told to illustrate the reprehensibility of violence in love. Comparison of *Der minnen loep* with the Vulgate (Daniel 13:1-64) will show that Susanna’s husband, Joachim, and all that is related to him, has been eliminated from the story. Why? To make Susanna an unmarried woman: Book II of *Der minnen loep* is about the premarital phase of ‘good’ love. Hence this story about violence will serve its purpose better if it is not about a married woman but about a maiden.

In spite of his dependence on what he had learned from the schools about the classics and especially about Ovid, Potter has written a highly individual and absolutely unique *ars amandi*. He was

not a Chaucer, nor a Gower, but he *was* a Middle Dutch, indeed a medieval, Ovid.

TRANSLATED BY ERIK KOOPER

NOTES

- 1 E. H. Alton, 'Ovid in the Mediaeval Schoolroom', *Hermathena* 94 (1960), 21–38, and 95 (1961), 67–82; C. Mainzer, 'John Gower's Use of the "Mediaeval Ovid" in the *Confessio Amantis*', *Medium Ævum* 41 (1972), 215–29; J. H. McGregor, 'Ovid at School: from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century', *Classical Folia* 32 (1978), 29–51; A. M. J. van Buuren, *Der minnen loep van Dirc Potter: Studie over een Middelnederlandse Ars Amandi* (with a summary in English) (Utrecht: HES, 1979); A. J. Minnis, 'John Gower, *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', *Medium Ævum* 49 (1980), 207–29; A. Minnis, "'Moral Gower" and Medieval Literary Theory', in A. J. Minnis, ed., *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 50–78; A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988). I did not consult the unpublished B. Litt. thesis by Miss M. C. Edwards, 'A Study of Six Characters in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women with Reference to Medieval Scholia on Ovid's *Heroides*' (Oxford, 1970) (ref. to by Minnis, 'John Gower', n. 7).
- 2 H. Dörrie, 'Untersuchungen zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte von Ovids Epistulae Heroïdum', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse* (1960), 113–230 and 359–423, and (1961), 275–386; F. Munari, *Catalogue of the Mss. of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1957); E. J. Kenney, 'The Manuscript Tradition of Ovid's *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*', *The Classical Quarterly* 56 (1962), 1–31.
- 3 Van Buuren, *Der minnen loep*, pp. 192–7 and n. 281 (literature); Minnis, 'John Gower'; Minnis, "'Moral Gower'"; Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*.
- 4 G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Complete Works of John Gower*, vols. II and III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).
- 5 Mainzer, 'John Gower's Use of Ovid'; Minnis, 'John Gower'.
- 6 Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford University Press, 1988); S. B. Meech, 'Chaucer and an Italian Translation of the *Heroides*', *PMLA* 45 (1930), 110–28; R. W. Frank, Jr, *Chaucer and The Legend of Good Women* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Minnis, 'John Gower'; J. M. Cowen, 'Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*: Structure and Tone', *Studies in Philology* 82 (1985), 416–36.
- 7 Van Buuren, *Der minnen loep*, pp. 199–201; Minnis, 'John Gower', pp. 207–8, 211, 212, 214.

- 8 Van Buuren, *Der minnen loep*, p. 201.
- 9 Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, edited with an English translation by G. Showerman. 2nd edn, rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 18–31.
- 10 Ovid: *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, edited with an English translation by J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 178–233, lines 591–608.
- 11 For example, H. S. Sedlmayer, *Prolegomena Critica ad Heroides Ovidianas* (Vindobonae, 1878), pp. 96 and 98; Alton, 'Ovid', p. 70; Van Buuren, *Der minnen loep*, p. 205; Minnis, 'John Gower', pp. 211–12.
- 12 Alton, 'Ovid', p. 70.
- 13 Cf. *Remedia Amoris*, 591–608.
- 14 Cf. Mainzer, 'John Gower's Use of Ovid', p. 223.
- 15 For a survey, see A. Rooney, *Geoffrey Chaucer: a Guide through the Critical Maze* (Bristol Classical Press, 1989), pp. 96–102.
- 16 Meech, 'Chaucer', pp. 110–28.
- 17 Minnis ('John Gower', p. 227, n. 32) does not agree with Miss Edwards' interpretation. She is of the opinion that Chaucer 'shares the commentator's attitude to Phyllis'.
- 18 C. David Benson, 'Incest and Moral Poetry in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Chaucer Review* 19 (1984–5), 105.
- 19 Cf. Cowen, 'Chaucer's *Legend*', pp. 416–36.
- 20 Frank, *Chaucer*; E. T. Hansen, 'Irony and the Antifeminist Narrator in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*', *JEGP* 82 (1983), 11–31; Cowen, 'Chaucer's *Legend*'.
- 21 Cf. Van Buuren, *Der minnen loep*, pp. 6–34, and F. P. van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer: Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1988), pp. 225–68, and the literature referred to at these places. Van Oostrom's book is also available in an English translation: *Court and Culture: Dutch Literature, 1350–1450*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 22 P. Leendertz. Wz., ed., *Der minnen loep* (Leiden, 1845–47).
- 23 Such as the stories of *Anaxarete and Iphis* (I.1179–246), *Ariadne and Theseus* (I.1351–662), *Oenone and Paris* (I.1889–2098), *Hyppisyle and Jason* (I.2133–96), *Scylla and Minos* (I.2197–371), *Polyxena and Achilles* (I.3041–212).
- 24 Such as *Pyramus and Thisbe* (II.961–1130), *Susanna and the Elders* (II.2494–584), *Cydidpe and Aconcius* (II.2615–701), *Pelops and Hippodamia* (II.2705–806), *Achilles and Deidamia* (II.2853–3030), *Olympias and Nectanabus* (II.3067–191).
- 25 Such as *David and Mikal* (IV.661–727), *Ahasveros, Wasti and Esther* (IV.790–856), *Hypermaestra and Hynus* [i.e. *Lyneus*] (IV.999–1094), *Orphaen and Lymniosse* [i.e. the story of *Griseldis*] (IV.1095–266), *Admetus and Alcestis* (IV.1349–62), *Protesilaus and Laodamia* (IV.1363–86), *Capaneus and Euadne* (IV.1387–418), *Ulysses and Penelope* (IV.1419–560), *Hermione and Orestes* (IV.1561–602), *Tholomanes, Boecia and Paschalis* (IV.1681–

- 808), *Roseboem at Schiedam* (iv.1971-2032), *Procris and Cephalus* (iv.2036-192).
- 26 Van Buuren, *Der minnen loef*, pp. 202-4 and nn. 303-8 (pp. 375-8).
- 27 E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 6th edn (Bern: Francke, 1967), pp. 501-2; L. J. Friedman, 'Gradus amoris', *Romance Philology* 19 (1965-6), 167-77; R. Schnell, 'Ovids *Ars Amatoria* und die höfische Minnetheorie', *Euphorion* 69 (1975), 132-59; R. Schnell in his *Causa Amoris: Liebeskonzeption und Liebesdarstellung in der Mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Bern: Francke, 1985), pp. 64-5, does not agree with my opinion. He and Ingeborg Glier (in her review of Van Buuren, *Der minnen loef*, in *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 91 (1980), 162-3) instead prefer to think of 'Einfluss volkssprachlicher Liebeskonzeptionen'.
- 28 Friedman, 'Gradus Amoris', p. 172.
- 29 Van Buuren, *Der minnen loef*, pp. 212-37.
- 30 *Ovid: The Art of Love and Other Poems*, pp. 140-3, and Van Buuren, *Der minnen loef*, pp. 104-8.
- 31 Ghisalberti, 'Mediaeval Biographies', p. 59.

CHAPTER 10

'Hovedans': fourteenth-century dancing songs in the Rhine and Meuse area

Frank Willaert

From 30 September to 5 October 1285, a magnificent tournament was held at Chauvency (now in the département de la Meuse, near the French–Belgian border), in which, besides the Lotharingian nobility, many knights from Hainault, Brabant, Flanders, Picardy and the duchy of Limburg took part.¹ Thanks to the Arras(?) author Jacques Bretel, we possess a detailed and reliable day-by-day account of this event.² In his poem, Bretel not only describes the fighting, but also pays much attention to the more peaceful interludes of the festival, especially to the entertainment after supper with music, singing and dancing. Among other things he tells us how, during the last evening, this elegant company of noble ladies and gentlemen performs a series of dance-acts – *le beguignaige, l'ermite, le pelerignaige, le provencel, le robardel, Berengier ou le chapelet* (lines 1483–6) – in order to comfort the wounded knights. The majority of these *baleries* – as Joseph Bédier called these mimic dances³ – are just names for us, except the last one, which is described by Bretel at some length. In this act, a noble lady (a role performed by the countess of Luxemburg) pretends to be more interested in toying with her chaplet than in obtaining a husband; but when her partner in the game, a minstrel, claims to have found the very man for her, she is delighted. While she is adorning herself and behaving as if overpowered by love, the minstrel persuades a knight in the audience to come and meet her. She takes him by the hand and, singing merrily, leads him away.⁴

In a recent article Robert Mullally has argued that 'the six exchanges of dialogue between Madame de Luxembourg and the minstrel constitute a single musico-poetical number with a well-defined structure. The lines group themselves easily into three stanzas each consisting of two rhyming couplets of which the minstrel sings the first and Madame de Luxembourg the second.'⁵ The

whole piece can consequently be represented in the following formula, in which the Roman numerals refer to the minstrel's (I) and to the lady's part (II) respectively, while each letter indicates one rhyme and its superscript figure the number of syllables in that rhyme's line:⁶

(i) I a⁸a⁸ II b¹⁴b¹⁴

(ii) I c⁸c⁸ II b¹⁴b¹⁴

(iii) I d⁸d⁸ II b¹⁴b¹⁴

There can be no doubt that Mullally is right when he claims that the dialogue between the countess and the minstrel must be considered as one song. But he seems to have overlooked the fact that, in each stanza, the first two lines also rhyme with the eighth syllable in the third line. The latter should accordingly be divided into two lines of eight and six syllables respectively. Line 4, which possesses an identical metrical structure, should also be divided (8 + 6 syllables).⁷ For the first stanza, for example, this results in the following arrangement:

- 1 'Douce dame, parlez a nous!
- 2 Que quiert vostres gens cors li dous?
- 3a 'Sire, qu'an afiert il a vos?
- 3b Ne vos voi pas bien saige.
- 4a J'ai fait mon chapelet jolif
- 4b La jus en cel boschage!

('Sweet lady, speak to us! / What does your sweet body crave?' / 'Sir, what is it to you? / I think you are too bold. / I've made my pretty chaplet / down there in the wood'.)⁸

The whole piece should then be represented thus:⁹

(i) a⁸a⁸a⁸b⁶x⁸b⁶

(ii) c⁸[?]c⁸b⁶x⁸b⁶

(iii) d⁸d⁸d⁸b⁶d⁸b⁶

In the critical apparatus in Delbouille's edition one can find that this formula exactly represents the way these verses are written in one of the two manuscripts (Oxford, Douce 308).¹⁰ Our reasoning has not led us to a hypothetical reconstruction, but back to the medieval source.

Our formula is not unknown in Old French literature. Mullally rightly remarks that the b-rhymes in the countess of Luxemburg's responses remain the same (-a[i]ge) in each of the three stanzas and may thus be considered as a kind of refrain.¹¹ This reminds us of the thirteenth-century ballette as it has been defined by the French

scholar Pierre Bec: three short stanzas (of three or four lines) with a zadjalesque structure (i.e. aa[a]b), followed by a refrain of one to three lines, of which at least one has a b-rhyme.¹² In zadjalesque stanzas of four lines followed by a two-line refrain, the melody usually changes from the third line onwards (ααβ...).¹³ This melodic structure would coincide perfectly with the distribution of the lines between the minstrel and the lady, though this can never be known for certain, as neither manuscript gives the music. Anyhow, it is worth noticing that the metrical pattern 88 86 86 seems to corroborate our hypothesis.

The very same Oxford manuscript that contains the *Tournoi de Chauvency* proves that the ballette was a well-known genre in Lorraine. This manuscript, which originated in the neighbourhood of Metz in the early fourteenth century, includes the so-called Chansonnier d'Oxford, in which the songs are grouped by genre:¹⁴ the ballettes section contains quite a number of songs that answer to Bec's definition.¹⁵ Thanks to Jacques Bretel, we now have at our disposal valuable evidence that such ballettes were or could be used as dancing songs at the end of the thirteenth century.

In one of the most important manuscripts in Middle Dutch, the Van Hulthem manuscript,¹⁶ which was copied in (the neighbourhood of) Brussels about 1410, we find a song (f. 181rb), 'Een liedekijn van den hoede' ('Song of the Chaplet'), that in several respects reminds us of the *tour du chapelet* in Bretel's *Tournoi de Chauvency*. Here, too, there is a dialogue; here, too, a maiden's chaplet is the central motif; and here, too, in spite of the girl's reluctant attitude at the outset, the story has a happy ending. But it is the song's form that deserves our special interest. I quote the three opening stanzas:¹⁷

'In een prieel quam ic ghegaen
Al daer ic bloemkine scone vant staen.
Daer pluctic minen lieve saen
Van violetten desen hoet.
Steet hi mi wale?
Draghicken wale?
Dunct hi u goet?'

'Joncfrouwe, dien hoet die steet u wale.
Wel, overcuussche scone smale,
Gheeft mi den hoet!'

'Ic en wille, hi es soe fijn!
Den hoet sal draghen mijn minnekijn.

Dat ghi mi bidt heeft mi onmare.
Te biddene sone hebdi ghene spoet.
Steet hi mi wale?
Draghicken wale?
Dunct hi u goet?’

(In a bower once I went / Where many a pretty flower I found. / There for my love from violets / I instantly made this chaplet. / Does it suit me well? / Do I wear it well? / Does it please you?

That chaplet, lady, / Becomes you well indeed. / Pretty lady, pure and sweet, / Give the chaplet to me.

I won’t, it is so nice! / This chaplet my love shall wear. / Your request I must decline, / You will beg to no avail. / Does it suit me well? / Do I wear it well? / Does it please you?)

The first and (probably) the third stanza have a zadjal-structure (aaab) as well:

- (i) aaabCCB
- (iii) dd[?]bCCB

May we conclude that also this song was performed by two actors as a kind of mimic dance-play? Considering the similarities between the Middle Dutch song and the *tour du chapelet* this might well have been the case. The fact that the second, and also the fourth, fifth and sixth stanzas show different patterns does not contradict this hypothesis. In the French balerie, Madame de Luxembourg likewise sings a number of lines which fall outside the frame of the three-strophic ballette.¹⁸ As we are dealing with (amateur) actors who knew how the ‘play’ was to be performed, heterostrophy (i.e. the occurrence of different strophic forms in one song) did not really pose a problem. Things would probably be different with a group dance, which is likely to require much more regularity with regard to rhythm and music.

Songs with zadjalesque stanzas are rare in Middle Dutch literature. In addition to the ‘Liedeken van den hoede’, I only know of three more cases: one one-stanza song with an initial refrain, which occurs at the end of a *Minnerede* in a manuscript in The Hague (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 128 E 2¹⁹), and two of the nine songs that are attributed to Duke John I of Brabant (d. 1294) in the famous large Heidelberg manuscript (the so-called Manesse Codex).

The rest of the duke’s lyrical *œuvre*, with the possible exception of song v, is also closely connected with the Old French lyric of the late thirteenth century.²⁰ His seventh song is a perfect example of the

virelai form: an introductory refrain is followed by three tripartite stanzas, the cauda of which ($c^4d^4c^4d^4$) matches the rhyme and metre (and, no doubt, the melody) of the refrain ($C^4D^4C^4D^4$), which is repeated at the close of each stanza. The formula is:²¹

$3^*a^4b^4 a^4b^4 c^4d^4c^4d^4 C^4D^4C^4D^4$

Most other songs of the duke have a form that is equally virelai-like, but as some of them (I, III and VIII) have no introductory refrains, they should be considered as ballades rather than as virelais.²² As a matter of fact, it is difficult to identify these songs unequivocally either as virelais or as ballades, as they have characteristics in common with both genres. This should not surprise us, as John of Brabant made his songs at a time when virelai and ballade had not yet crystallized into two distinguishable genres. This is evident from the ballettes section of the *Chansonnier d'Oxford*, which is made up of a motley collection of ballettes (in Pierre Bec's definition, see p. 170), virelais, ballades and all kinds of intermediate forms.²³ John's songs may be considered as a 'Germanic' counterpart of this French collection. For lack of a better term, I shall use the compound 'virelai-ballade' to name the hybrid genre the duke composed.

John's knowledge of French lyric forms need not surprise us. The duchy was situated on the linguistic frontier; the Brabant court had been a centre of French literary culture under John's father, Henry III (1248–61), who was a *trouvère* himself;²⁴ John's mother was a Burgundian princess²⁵ and, during John's reign, several marital relations linked the ducal family with the French-speaking courts of France, England and Flanders.

Why, then, did John not write his songs in French? An explanation may probably be found in his Lotharingian policy. Still more than his predecessors, John strove for control over the entire territory between the Scheldt and the Rhine. In doing so he tried to substantiate the title of duke of Lorraine, which his ancestor Geoffrey I had obtained from the German emperor in 1106.²⁶ From 1283 onwards the land between the Meuse and the Rhine was the theatre of his annual military expeditions against the count of Guelders and the archbishop of Cologne in the Limburg war of succession,²⁷ until John finally succeeded in his endeavours through his victory in the Battle of Woeringen (near Cologne) in 1288. Previous research has shown that the duke composed his songs in this same region, and that their German–Dutch language-mixture

should be attributed not to copyists, but to the author himself – and to his audience!²⁸

An analysis of the vocabulary cannot be undertaken here, but it would provide a clear illustration that the duke was open to literary influences from the east. Though one song, 'Eins meien morgens fruo' ('One Early Morning in May'), is a faithful transposition of French formulas and conventional vocabulary into Middle Dutch,²⁹ his other lyrics display a thorough familiarity with thirteenth-century *Minnesang*. The influence of the stereotyped language used by Gottfried von Neifen and his 'school' is obvious.³⁰

So John of Brabant's poetry is to be placed at the intersection of the Old French, Middle Dutch and Middle High German courtly love lyric: the forms are French, the formulas and vocabulary show High German influence. The latter part of this observation should be stressed, now that Thomas Klein has shown that several manuscripts which were traditionally considered to be evidence of the early reception of *Minnesang* in the north-western part of the empire, must in reality be situated elsewhere.³¹ Just like the recently discovered Maastricht lyric fragment,³² John of Brabant's poetry is an interesting witness to the fact that, before 1300 there did exist, in the Rhine and Meuse area, a public that was acquainted with *Minnesang*.

Whereas in French literature an evolution towards two fixed and distinct genres – the *virelai* and the *ballade* – is clearly perceptible in the course of the first half of the fourteenth century,³³ the hybrid *virelai-ballade* remained practically unchanged in the Rhineland areas and in the Low Countries for almost two centuries. The earliest representative after John of Brabant is probably a song by the Rhenish Franconian nobleman Konrad III von Bickenbach, who appears in charters from 1313 onwards;³⁴ but perhaps priority is due to the poem that an Alsatian (?) wrote down in the margin of the last page of the Schlettstädter Glossenhandschrift: according to the editor of the piece this may have happened as early as 1300, though the text seems later to me.³⁵ Most songs, however, turn up in Middle Dutch and Rhenish manuscripts of around 1400: four in the famous Gruuthuse manuscript (Bruges, c. 1400?), eight in the Haags Liederhandschrift (Holland or Lower Rhine, c. 1400), one in the Van Hulthem manuscript (southern part of the duchy of Brabant (Brussels?), c. 1410) and no fewer than forty songs in the Berliner Liederhandschrift (Lower Rhine, first quarter of the fifteenth

century).³⁶ According to Carl von Kraus, some songs in the Berlin and The Hague manuscripts might have been composed at the end of the thirteenth century – he has consequently included them in his *Deutsche Liederdichter des 13. Jahrhunderts*³⁷ – but such an early date is difficult to prove (or to refute).

According to an excellent witness of musical life in Rhineland, Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, a town clerk of Limburg an der Lahn, our virelai-ballade seems to have become a prominent genre only some eighty years after John of Brabant had practised it. In his *Limburger Chronik* he reports that, c. 1360, songs of five or six stanzas were supplanted by songs that consisted of three stanzas and a refrain.³⁸ This remark does not only apply to the Rhineland: prominent poets like the Monk of Salzburg and Hugo von Monfort practise that genre in south Germany in the second part of the fourteenth century. It is also well represented in the numerous song books that originate in several southern German towns (e.g. Nuremberg, Augsburg) from c. 1400 onwards.³⁹

So the virelai-ballade was first practised in Lotharingia, both at Romance and Germanic courts, in the second half of the thirteenth century. But it only became prominent in the Rhenish repertoire about the middle of the next century, and then spread almost immediately to the southern part of Germany. The latter point should be stressed, as northern Germany is usually considered by Germanic scholars to have been a bastion of the old-fashioned *Minnesang*, in contrast to the modern and more dynamic south.⁴⁰ The opposite seems to have been just as true: this is documented by the complaint of the Austrian poet Heinrich der Teichner (active c. 1350 – c. 1365) that Rhenish modes had totally supplanted the traditional *Minnesang* ('der alten lied').⁴¹ Almost a century later, Rhineland songs still seem to have been in good repute: it is certainly no coincidence that in the well-known dancing song 'Ich spring an disem ringe' (Lochamer Liederbuch, Nuremberg, 1460), of all the German girls it is precisely 'die freweleyn vom Reyne' (the maidens from the Rhine) who are commended for their skill in singing new songs.⁴²

In the Low Countries the Rhineland virelai-ballade was imitated as well. It has already been pointed out that several songs in the Gruuthuse, Van Hulthem and The Hague manuscripts belong to that genre. One might also wonder whether the German-Dutch language mixture in these manuscripts – but also in a song by the

(The Hague?) composer Hugo Boy⁴³ or in a drinking song that was noted down by Pieter Potter, clerk of the count of Holland⁴⁴ – should not be considered as a proof of Rhineland influence on the west. Making a slight alteration in a remark by W. P. Gerritsen and Brigitte Schludermann, one might perhaps argue that the language mixture in these songs functions as 'ein poetisches Mittel, das den Zweck hat, die Atmosphäre des bewunderten *rheinischen* Minnesangs hervorzurufen' (a poetic technique that aims at evoking the atmosphere of the revered *Rhenish Minnesang* – italics mine).⁴⁵

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the land of Meuse and Rhine enjoyed a good reputation indeed in the musical sphere. Musicians from this region were welcome at many foreign courts. For instance, the numerous German minstrels who performed at the court of Albert of Bavaria (1358–1404) in The Hague were to a great extent of Rhenish origin.⁴⁶ Especially the players of loud or *hauts* instruments (trumpets, shawms, etc.) were held in good repute, and several found employment outside their country of origin. As an example we can cite the wind instrumentalist Herman de Bonghere, who c. 1340 was in the service of the immensely rich magnate Willem van Duvenvoorde, counsellor of the count of Holland and the duke of Brabant. This Herman de Bonghere, who is well known among students of Middle Dutch literature, thanks to a famous article by G. I. Liefstinck,⁴⁷ was from the village of Stokkem, situated near the Meuse in the county of Loon.⁴⁸ It is also worth mentioning that in 1374 the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, sent one of his minstrels to this area 'to attract additional German musicians to his court'. As a result of this journey a woodwind instrumentalist from Dinant, a small town situated on the Meuse, took up office at the Burgundian court.⁴⁹ When Philip succeeded his father-in-law Louis of Male as count of Flanders, no less than three of the eight minstrels in his service originated from the Rhine and Meuse area: the wind instrumentalists Jean de Dinant and Jacot Smul (from Cologne) and the tambourinist Claus Tabourin, sometimes called 'l'Alement'.⁵⁰ But also at numerous other courts, and even as far as Aragon, minstrels from that region managed to secure permanent positions.⁵¹

What strikes one most is that all these musicians played instruments that were particularly well suited for performing dance music.⁵² The name of Herman de Bonghere has come down to us due to a misadventure that befell him when, during the siege of Tournai in 1340, he was playing a dance melody (*rey*).⁵³ The

following passage from *La Prison amoureuse*, an allegorical poem written in 1372–3 by Jean Froissart for his patron, Duke Wenceslas of Brabant, is likewise of some interest. The author has just described a room that is fit for dancing. Then he goes on to say:

La estoient li menestrel,
 Qui s'aquitoient bien et bel
 A piper, et tout de nouvel,
 Houes dances teles qu'il sceurent (354–7)⁵⁴

(The minstrels were there, who blew, very beautifully, such *houes dances* as they had learned lately)

The strange nominal phrase *Houes dances* has caused the editor trouble. 'Sans doute', Fourrier writes, 'faut-il voir dans le premier mot un dérivé – pris au figuré – de *houer*: "gratter, frapper la terre du sabot, en parlant du cheval"' (No doubt one should consider the first word as a derivative, in a figurative sense, of *houer*: '[speaking of horses] to scratch, to beat the ground with hoofs').⁵⁵ The question mark behind his definition in the glossary ('dances marquées du pied' (dances measured by the stamping of the feet))⁵⁶ seems justified: the proposed etymology does not give us a high opinion of the light-footedness of the dancers. The problem dissolves when one considers *houes dances* as a Germanic loan word (cf. Middle Dutch *hofdans*, MHG *hovetanz*, 'court dance'). Though I have not found a corresponding lemma in the *Mittelniederdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, I believe that the word as it stands in Froissart's text was borrowed from Low German: the *d* has not shifted to *t*, and the genitive *hoves-* is often found, notably in Westphalia, as the first element in a compound word (cf. *hoves-dink*, *hoves-gericht*, etc.).⁵⁷ Should Froissart's use of this loan word, in this form, be explained by the popularity of easterly (Lower Rhenish?) dance music at the Brabantine court?

The fact that the same word, at about the same time, appears in Middle English texts as well, seems to confirm this hypothesis. The earliest occurrence is probably in Chaucer's *House of Fame* (c. 1380), at least if the reading *loue daunces* in the Fairfax manuscript is emended in *houe dauncis* on the authority of Caxton's edition of 1483:⁵⁸

Ther saugh I famous, olde and yonge,
 Pipers of the Duche tonge,
 To lerne hove-daunces, sprynges,
 Reyes, and these straunge thynges (1233–6)⁵⁹

Who are these 'pipers of the Duche tonge', who suddenly turn up in the middle of a series of classical musicians (Orpheus, Arion, Chiron) and a biblical one (Joab)? According to R. M. Smith, Chaucer had in mind here the pipers that were in the service of his patron John of Gaunt.⁶⁰ Smith assumes that the names of several of John of Gaunt's minstrels indicate that they were of Flemish or Dutch origin, but I think that the possibility that these people, or at least some of them, came from areas further eastward (Rhineland?) should also be taken into account: for example, Hans Gough (< MHG *gouch*, 'fool'),⁶¹ Henry Hultescrane (< MHG **hulz-krane*(?), 'wooden crane'),⁶² Smeltes (< MHG *smelz*, 'lard'),⁶³ Johan Tyas or Tyes (an abridged form, current in north Germany and Rhineland, of Matthias),⁶⁴ Jacob Bumpe (< MHG *bumbel*, 'drummer').⁶⁵

Gower too uses the word *hove-daunce*, twice even, in his *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390),⁶⁶ but no wind instruments are mentioned here: in one case the tune is sung,⁶⁷ whereas in the other the music is delivered on 'low' (mainly stringed) instruments. But dance music from (the north-west of) the German Empire seems to have been appreciated in the entourage of the English king already in 1350. In his famous chronicle Jean Froissart narrates how in that year, during a naval expedition in the Channel, King Edward III 'faisoist ses ménestrels *corner* devant lui *une danse d'Alemagne*, que messires Jehans Chandos, qui là estoit, avoit nouvellement raporté' (made his minstrels blow a *dance d'Alemagne*, which Sir John Chandos, who was present, had recently brought from there).⁶⁸ The geographical designation *Alemagne* is rather vague, as was the case with the word *Duche* in the passage taken from the *House of Fame*. All we can say is that this dance music came from an area east of the Scheldt, in the German Empire.

Other examples of the fame of German (Rhenish?) dance music outside the Holy Empire are to be found in the *Voir Dit* (1362-5) by Guillaume de Machaut and in *Les Echechs amoureux* (1370-80), an anonymous work in the tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*. In his pseudo-autobiography Machaut twice describes the music of his ballade on the refrain *Le grant desir que j'ai de vous veoir* as like a *rés d'Alemaigne*.⁶⁹ The same expression also appears in the description of the music made by the minstrels in the allegorical garden in the *Echechs amoureux*:

La oÿt on res d'Alemaigne
De mainte guyse moult estraigne,

Dances, estanpies, chansons
 En pluseurs divers plaisans sons
 Et moult d'aultres notes nouvelles.⁷⁰

(There one heard *res d'Alemaigne*, in many wonderful ways, dances, estampies, chansons to various pleasant tunes and many other new melodies.)

Up to now the collocation *rés d'Alemaigne* has been interpreted rather vaguely as 'a German melody or composition',⁷¹ but I believe that *rés* is nothing other than the Germanic (Dutch, Low or High German) word *rei*. While I must leave it to musicologists to determine whether the music of Machaut's ballade does indeed show some dance-like characteristics, the fact that he explicitly mentions that his composition can also be played on wind instruments like organs and bagpipes seems to confirm my hypothesis.⁷²

That Rhenish wind instrumentalists and their music had an excellent reputation is no surprise. In his valuable chronicle, Tilemann Elhen states explicitly that players on wind instruments had made an enormous progress in Rhineland about 1360:

Auch hat ez sich also vurwandelt mit den pifen unde pifenspel unde hat ufgestegen in der museken, unde ni also gut waren bit her, als nu in ist anegangen. Dan wer vur funf oder ses jaren ein gut pifer was geheißen in dem ganzen lande, der endauc itzunt nit eine flige.⁷³

(As to wind instruments, things have also changed and there has been a great improvement in the art of music. The players have never been so good as is the case today. He who was called a good player five or six years ago, isn't worth a straw these days.)

But does the reputation of the Rhenish *pifers* tell anything about the fame and influence of the Rhenish love lyric? I think it does. Both repertories seem to have been closely connected: Tilemann repeatedly mentions that a given *lit* was both sung and played on wind instruments.⁷⁴ One should not think here, I believe, of instrumental accompaniment,⁷⁵ but rather of two modes of performing (either instrumentally or vocally) the same 'song',⁷⁶ just as was the case with the passage in the *Voir Dit* I mentioned above. Also the fact that Tilemann mentions the ascent of the three-strophic song with refrain (see above, p. 174) and the growing virtuosity of the wind instrumentalists in one and the same breath, makes one suppose that the use and functions of songs and *pifenspel* did not lie far apart.

In a recent article I have claimed that the virelai-ballade was

often used as a dancing song.⁷⁷ The Austrian Heinrich der Teichner seems to have taken this for granted: his complaint about the ascent of Rhenish songs (i.e. of the virelai-ballade) follows without interruption upon an outburst against the (wild) dances of his time.⁷⁸ The fact that the virelai-ballade mostly turns up in the company of genres which are usually considered to be dancing songs as well, is also revealing: we have seen that John of Brabant practised the virelai-ballade and the ballette; in the Gruuthuse, Van Hulthem and Berlin manuscripts as well as in manuscript Munich, Bayer. Staatsbibl., clm 28 557, which originated in east Swabia, virelai-ballades are combined with rondeaux.⁷⁹

I hope to have shown that in the fourteenth century the Rhine and Meuse area played a more important role in the history of the medieval lyric than has been acknowledged so far. Dancing-song genres were borrowed from French literature, were subsequently developed in a more or less idiosyncratic way, and in their turn had an important influence on a large part of the lyrical production in the Low Countries and southern Germany in the second half of the fourteenth century. The success of these genres must probably be connected with the excellent reputation Rhenish wind instrumentalists had acquired throughout western Europe. If we want to gain more insight into the performance and social significance of these songs, it will be necessary to connect information from different fields with one another, especially from German, Romance and Dutch studies and musicology. This article is only an attempt at such an approach, and should be considered as an invitation to interdisciplinary collaboration and debate.

NOTES

- 1 I am indebted to Drs V. Fraeters, Dr St. Geukens and Dr E. Kooper, who kept a watchful eye on my English, and to Prof. Dr P. Hessmann, Prof. Dr Th. Venckeleer, Dr P. Avonds, Dr Th. Mertens (Antwerp), Dr Cl. Thiry (Liège), Prof. Dr J. Goossens (Louvain/Münster), Dr C. Vellekoop (Utrecht), Prof. Dr F. P. van Oostrom and Dr W. van Anrooij (Leiden) for their stimulating remarks. All errors, of course, are mine.
- 2 Jacques Bretel, *Le Tournoi de Chauvency*, ed. Maurice Delbouille (Liège and Paris: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1932). For the possibility that the author was related to the well-known Arras family of the same name, see p. lvi.

- 3 Joseph Bédier, 'Les plus anciennes danses françaises', *Revue des Deux Mondes* 31 (1906), p. 401.
- 4 Bretel, *Tournoi de Chauvency*, lines 4181–300. Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968), pp. 197–9, gives an almost complete translation of this passage.
- 5 Robert Mullally, 'Balerie and Ballade', *Romania* 104 (1983), p. 535.
- 6 Mullally, 'Balerie', p. 536. Mullally wrongly counts fifteen syllables in each b-line. As the rhymes are feminine, the last syllable should not be included.
- 7 The fact that, in the third stanza, line 4a (*troverés*) rhymes with lines 1, 2 and 3a (*trouvéz, demandéz, amenéz*), confirms my opinion.
- 8 Translation by Dronke, *Medieval Lyric*, p. 190, with some modifications.
- 9 The second line of the second stanza is lacking.
- 10 The rendering of the stanza in the other manuscript (Mons, Bibliothèque de la ville, 330–215) is very irregular. The distribution of the verses in Delbouille's edition is not supported by the manuscripts.
- 11 Mullally, 'Balerie', p. 536.
- 12 Pierre Bec, *La lyrique française au moyen âge (XIIe–XIIIe siècles): Contribution à une typologie des genres poétiques médiévaux*, vol. 1: *Etudes* (Paris: Picard, 1977), pp. 228–33.
- 13 Cf. the melodic schemes as described in Hans Spanke, *G. Raynauds Bibliographie des altfranzösischen Lieder*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1955): ααβγ/βγ: R 835, 1362, 1405; ααββ'/ββ': R 458; ααβα/βα: R 577; ααβγ/δδ': R 611a; ααβγ/γγ': 1604a; ααβγ/δε: R 1862; ααβγ/δγ: R 1902a, 1936a. Here each Greek letter indicates the melody of one verse. Notice that the first melodic change always occurs in the third line.
- 14 This manuscript is described in Paul Meyer, 'Troisième rapport sur une mission littéraire en Angleterre et en Ecosse', *Archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires*, 2nd series, 5 (1868), 154–62 and 216–44. For further bibliography on this manuscript, see Robert White Linker, *A Bibliography of Old French Lyrics* (Mississippi: Romance Monographs, 1979), p. 28.
- 15 This can most easily be verified in Friedrich Gennrich, *Rondeaux, Virelais und Balladen aus dem Ende des XII., dem XIII. und dem ersten Drittel des XIV. Jahrhunderts mit den überlieferten Melodien*, vol. 1 (Dresden: Niemeyer, 1921), though this edition must be used with caution: see, for example, nos. 156, 172, 179, 180, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 198, 203, 214, etc. A diplomatic edition of the Chansonnier d'Oxford is Georg Steffens, 'Die altfranzösische Liederhandschrift der Bodleiana in Oxford, Douce 308', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 50, vol. 97 (1896), 283–308; 51, vol. 98 (1897), 343–82; 51, vol. 99 (1897), 77–100 and 339–88; 54, vol. 104 (1900), 331–54.
- 16 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 15,589–15,623. For more information on this manuscript, see H. van Dijk's contribution to this volume. For the possibility that this manuscript was written in Brussels,

- see W. van Anrooij, 'Bijdrage tot een geografische situering van het handschrift Van Hulthem', *Spiegel der Letteren* 28 (1986), 225-33.
- 17 The song was edited by Jan Frans Willems twice, once in his *Mengelingen van historisch-vaderlandschen inhoud* (Antwerp: Schoeeters, 1827-30), p. 303, and once in his *Oude Vlaemsche liederen ten deele met de melodiën* (Ghent: Ghyselynck, 1848), pp. 327-8. My quotation is based on a microfilm; I have added punctuation and adapted the spelling of *i*, *j*, *u* and *v* to modern usage. The English translation is by Drs Veerle Fraeters.
- 18 Some of these lines emerge elsewhere as parts of a larger song: line 4282 ('Diex, trop demouree! Quant venra? – Sa demouree m'occirra' (O God, he stays too long! When will he come? – His delay will kill me)) functions as a refrain in an eight-line rondeau, quoted by Gérard d'Amiens in his *Meliacin*; line 4296 ('La merci Deu j'ai ataint – Se que je voloie' (Thank God, I have achieved what I wanted)) constitutes the refrain of a rondeau that is quoted in the chansonnier part of the Oxford manuscript. Two other songs of respectively one line (4220) and five lines (4289-92) have not been found elsewhere. For these data, see *Tournoi de Chauvency*, ed. Delbouille, pp. lxx-lxxi.
- 19 *Die Haager Liederhandschrift: Faksimile des Originals mit Einleitung und Transskription*, ed. E. F. Kossmann (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1940), no. 88, lines 45-53.
- 20 Renate Hausner, 'Spiel mit dem Identischen: Studien zum Refrain deutschsprachiger lyrischer Dichtung des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts', in Peter K. Stein, ed., *Sprache – Text – Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Kümmerle, 1980), pp. 313-14.
- 21 The figure at the head of the formula indicates the number of stanzas, the asterisk the presence of an introductory refrain, while the figures within the formula refer to the number of stressed syllables in each line.
- 22 'The distinction between ballade and virelai . . . is a little hazy, but an essential guide to classification is the placing of the refrain' (Nigel Wilkins, 'Virelai', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. xx (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 1). For a detailed formal analysis of John's songs, see Frank Willaert, 'Het minnelied als dancslied: Over verspreiding en functie van een ballade-achtige dichtvorm in de late middeleeuwen', in F. P. van Oostrom and Frank Willaert, eds., *De studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde: stand en toekomst* (Symposium Antwerpen 22-24 September 1988) (Hilversum: Verloren, 1989), pp. 72-3.
- 23 Ernest Hoepffner, 'Virelais et ballades dans le Chansonnier d'Oxford (Douce 308)', *Archivum Romanicum* 4 (1920), 31-40; Robert Arthur Lippmann, 'The Medieval French Ballade from its beginnings to the Mid-Fourteenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1977). I shall give a more detailed account of similarities and

- differences between this collection and John's poetry in my edition of the latter's songs (in preparation).
- 24 Albert Henry, *L'Oeuvre lyrique d'Henri III, duc de Brabant* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1948), and Guy Muraille, 'Le duc Henri III de Brabant et le trouvère Jean Erart', *Les Lettres Romanes* 12 (1958), 414-20.
 - 25 So, John's mother tongue must have been French; cf. Helmut Tervoooren, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu Herzog Jan I. von Brabant und zu seiner Pastourelle "Eins meien morgens fruo"', in Rüdiger Krüger, Jürgen Kühnel and Joachim Kuolt, eds., *Ist zwîvel herzen nâchgebûr: Günther Schweikle zum 60. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: Helfant Edition, 1989), p. 128.
 - 26 On this Lotharingian policy of the duke, see P. Avonds, 'Brabant en Limburg 1100-1400', *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. II (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1982), pp. 452-82.
 - 27 For a map of John's military operations, see J. Goossens, 'De geografie van de Limburgse successieoorlog bij Jan van Heelu', in S. Theissen and J. Vromans, eds., *Album Moors: Een bundel opstellen aangeboden aan Joseph Moors ter gelegenheid van zijn 75ste verjaardag* (Liège: Cipl, 1989), p. 116.
 - 28 Frank Willaert, 'Over "Ic sac noit so roden mont" van hertog Jan I van Brabant', *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 79 (1986), 481-5, and 'Entre trouvères et Minnesänger: la poésie de Jean I^{er}, duc de Brabant', in Keith Busby and Erik Kooper, eds., *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context. Selected papers from the 5th Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Dalfsen, The Netherlands, 9-16 August, 1986* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1990), pp. 586-9; Tervoooren, 'Einige Bemerkungen', pp. 128-9.
 - 29 Frank Willaert, 'A propos d'une ballette de Jean I^{er}, duc de Brabant (1253-1294): (Eins meien morgens fruo)', *Etudes germaniques* 35 (1980), 387-97.
 - 30 This will be shown in my edition of John's poetry. Unlike Tervoooren ('Bemerkungen', p. 137, n. 9), I do not discern any special influence of Heinrich von Morungen.
 - 31 Thomas Klein, 'Zur Verbreitung mittelhochdeutscher Lyrik in Norddeutschland (Walther, Neidhart, Frauenlob)', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 106 (1987), 72-112.
 - 32 Helmut Tervoooren and Thomas Bein, 'Ein neues Fragment zum Minnesang und zur Sangspruchdichtung. Reinmar von Zweter, Neidhart, Kelin, Rumzant und Unbekanntes', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 107 (1988), 24.
 - 33 Cf. Lippman, *The Medieval French Ballade*.
 - 34 Willaert, 'Het minnelied als danslied', p. 74.
 - 35 Bethmann, 'Ein Liebeslied', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum* 5 (1845), 418-19. Bethmann founds his dating ('aus dem ende des 13n oder dem anfang des 14n jh.') on palaeographic grounds. Elias Steinmeyer and Eduard Sievers, *Die althochdeutschen Glossen*, vol. IV (Berlin: Weid-

- mannsche Buchhandlung, 1898), p. 614, assign a later (and vaguer) date to it: 'ein im xiv jh. eingetragenes Minnelied'. J. Fasbender, who deals with the history of this manuscript (*Die Schlettstädter Vergilglossen und ihre Verwandten* (Strasburg: Trübner, 1908), pp. 5–20), does not mention the poem.
- 36 More information in Willaert, 'Minnelied als danslied', pp. 75–8. On the Berlin MS, see also my article 'Laatmiddeleeuwse danslyriek in een land zonder grens. Het Berlijnse liederenhandschrift mgf 922', in Helga Hipp, ed., *Niederlandistik und Germanistik – Tangenten und Schnittpunkte* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 1992), pp. 157–68.
- 37 Carl von Kraus, ed., *Deutsche Liederdichter des 13. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), vol. 1: *Text*, pp. 288–91 and 294–7; vol. II: *Kommentar*, pp. 344–7 and 349–51.
- 38 'Item in disem selben jare vurwandelten sich dictamina unde gedichte in Dûschen lidern. Want man bit her lider lange gesongen hat mit funf oder ses gesetzen, da machent di meister nu lider di heißent widersenge, mit dren gesetzen' (Arthur Wyss, ed., *Die Limburger Chronik des Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen*, 2nd edn. Monumenta Germaniae historica, Deutsche Chroniken Vol. IV, 1 (Dublin and Zürich: Weidmann, 1973), p. 49, lines 4–6). This passage is discussed in Frank Willaert, 'Dw welt dw ist an allen orten reinisch: Über die Verbreitung zweier rheinischer Liedgattungen im Spätmittelalter', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, Sonderheft 108 (1989), 157–8.
- 39 Cf. Willaert, 'Minnelied als danslied', pp. 79–80, and 'Dw welt', pp. 168–9.
- 40 Cf., for example, Horst Brunner, 'Das deutsche Liebeslied um 1400', in Hans-Dieter Mück and Ulrich Müller, eds., *Gesammelte Vorträge der 600-Jahrfeier Oswalds von Wolkenstein, Seis am Schlern 1977* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1979), p. 136; Doris Sittig, 'Vyl wonders machet minne': *Das deutsche Liebeslied in der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts: Versuch einer Typologie* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1987), pp. 373–4.
- 41 Heinrich Niewöhner, ed., *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), p. 216. This passage is discussed in my article mentioned in note 38.
- 42 *Das Lochamer-Liederbuch*, ed. Walter Salmen and Christoph Petzsch (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1972), no. 42.
- 43 *Two Chansonniers from the Low Countries: French and Dutch polyphonic songs from the Leiden and Utrecht fragments (early 15th century)*, ed. J. van Biezen and J. P. Gumbert (Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1985), L 22. On Hugo Boy, see Antheunis Janse, 'Het muziekleven aan het hof van Albrecht van Beieren (1358–1404) in Den Haag', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 36 (1986), 143–4.
- 44 B. Overmaat, 'Een drinklied in het Rijksarchief', *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 70 (1977), 34–41.
- 45 W. P. Gerritsen and Brigitte Schludermann, 'Deutsch-Niederländische

- Literaturbeziehungen im Mittelalter: Sprachmischung als Kommunikationsweise und als poetisches Mittel', in Leonard Forster and Hans-Gert Roloff, eds., *Akten des v. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Cambridge 1975. Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik, Series A – Kongressberichte*, 2 (Berne and Frankfurt: Lang, 1976), p. 335. Instead of 'rheinischen', the original has 'hochdeutschen'.
- 46 Janse, 'Muziekleven', p. 145. The same seems to be true for a city like Utrecht: see Mariëlla Beukers, "'For the Honour of the City": Utrecht City Minstrels between 1377 and 1528', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 41 (1991), 15f.
- 47 G. I. Liefstinck, 'Pleidooi voor de philologie in de oude en eerbiedwaardige ruime betekenis van het woord', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 81 (1965), 64.
- 48 Cf. Guillaume des Marez, 'Un document relatif à Jacques Van Artevelde', *Compte rendu des séances de la Commission Royale d'Histoire ou Recueil de ses bulletins*, 5th series, vol. 8 (Brussels: Hayez, 1898), pp. 305–10; Joseph Cuvelier, *Les origines de la fortune de la maison d'Orange-Nassau: contribution à l'histoire du capitalisme au moyen âge*. Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques: Mémoires, 2nd series, vol. 16, fasc. 2 (Brussels: Lamertin, 1921), pp. 23–4; Hans van Werveke, *Jacob van Artevelde*, 2nd edn (The Hague: Kruseman, 1982), pp. 15–18. All these authors, and Liefstinck, wrongly call this minstrel Herman de Boughere (see W. van Anrooij, *Spiegel van ridderschap: Heraut Gelre en zijn 'Ereredes'* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1990), p. 256, n. 49). The name de Boughere probably indicates that this minstrel also played the drum (cf. *MNW* 1, 1359–60, s.v. *bonge, bongen, bongenaer*).
- 49 Craig Wright, *Music at the Court of Burgundy 1364–1419: a Documentary History* (Henryville: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1979), p. 24.
- 50 Wright, *Music at the Court of Burgundy*, p. 45.
- 51 André Pirrò, *Histoire de la musique de la fin du xive siècle à la fin du xvie* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1940), p. 26. See also his (very informative) article 'Musiciens allemands et auditeurs français au temps des rois Charles V et Charles VI', *Studien zur Musikgeschichte: Festschrift für Guido Adler zum 75. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1930), pp. 71–7. On Aragon, see, for example, Higinio Anglés, 'Les musiciens flamands en Espagne et leur influence sur la polyphonie espagnole', *International Society for Musical Research, Fifth Congress (Utrecht, 3–7 July 1952): Report* (Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1953), pp. 48–9, who points out that two ways of playing instrumental music were especially in favour at the court of the music-loving King John I of Aragon (1387–95): 'une façon de jouer typique pour les Flandres et une autre typique pour l'Allemagne'.
- 52 Cf., for example, Wright, *Music at the Court of Burgundy*, pp. 51–2.
- 53 Des Marez, 'Un document', p. 307.

- 54 Jean Froissart, *La Prison amoureuse*, ed. Anthime Fourrier (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974).
- 55 Froissart, *La Prison amoureuse*, p. 179. The present study was already on its way to the press when Robert Mullally published an interpretation very similar to the one I give below: 'Houes dances', *Neophilologus* 76 (1992), 29-34.
- 56 Froissart, *La Prison amoureuse*, p. 209.
- 57 Gerhard Cordes, ed., *Mittelniederdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, vol. II, fasc. 13 (Neumünster: Karl Wachholz Verlag, 1960), col. 327; see also cols. 369-71. Another explanation, however, might be that Froissart (or his scribes) wrongly considered *houe* as an adjective to be put in the plural (*houes*). Our hypothesis is invalid then.
- 58 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, vol. IV, p. 449. See also Mullally, 'Houes dances', p. 30.
- 59 Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford University Press, 1988). This is also the first occurrence of the word *reye* in Middle English; the source may be Middle Dutch or Middle High German (Ann Harding, *An Investigation into the Use and Meaning of Medieval German Dancing Terms* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1973), p. 157, and Mullally, 'Houes dances,' p. 31); see also the discussion of two passages in the *Voir-Dit* by Guillaume de Machaut below, as well as n. 71 on a passage in *Les Echecs amoureux*.
- 60 Roland M. Smith, "'Mynstralcie and noyse" in the House of Fame', *Modern Language Notes* 65 (1950), 524-5.
- 61 Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, vol. I (rpt. Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1974), col. 1057; see also Josef Karlmann Brechenmacher, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Familiennamen*, vol. I (Limburg a.d. Lahn: Starke-Verlag, 1957-60), p. 533.
- 62 *Hulz* for *holz* is Ripuarian (Hermann Paul, *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik*, 21st edn, ed. Hugo Moser and Ingeborg Schröbler (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1975), section 116, 2, 7).
- 63 Brechenmacher, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 535.
- 64 Hans Bahlow, *Niederdeutsches Namenbuch* (Walluf: Sändig, 1972), p. 496; Rudolf Zoder, *Familiennamen in Ostfalen*, vol. II (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), pp. 722 and 726; Josef Müller, *Rheinisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Erika Klopp Verlag, 1958-64), vol. V, p. 948 and vol. VIII, p. 1176.
- 65 Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, vol. I, col. 382.
- 66 G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), VI, 144, and VIII, 2680.
- 67 On the continent the word *hovedans* can also be used in the same circumstances: cf. the quotations in Harding, *An Investigation*, pp. 121-4. An interesting example is the 'Tanzleich' in the The Hague manuscript (*Die Haager Liederhandschrift*, ed. Kossmann, nos. 75-7).
- 68 Kervyn de Lettenhove, ed., *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. V, *Chroniques* (Brussels:

- Victor Devaux, 1868), p. 260. The passage is quoted in John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), p. 101. I owe this reference to Dr W. van Anrooij (Leiden). See also Pirrò, 'Musiciens allemands', p. 72.
- 69 Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Livre du Voir-Dit*, ed. Paulin Paris (Paris: Société des Bibliophiles Français, 1875), pp. 55 and 69; the ballade is on p. 67; see, however, the important correction of the passage on p. 69 in Jacqueline Cerquiglini, "*Un engin si sutil*". *Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au xive siècle* (Geneva and Paris: Editions Slatkine, 1985), pp. 219–20.
- 70 Christine Kraft, *Die Liebesgarten-Allegorie der "Echechs amoureux": kritische Ausgabe und Kommentar*. Europäische Hochschulschriften 13, 48 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 1977), p. 108, lines 633–8.
- 71 See, for example, Sarah Jane Williams, 'The Lady, the Lyrics and the Letters', *Early Music* 5 (1977), 467. In his translation of the *Echechs amoureux* (c. 1408) Lydgate does not seem to have understood this expression either, because he translates it as *rotys of Almany* (Ernst Sieper, ed., *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallite*, vol. 1, EETS ES 84 (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), line 5571). The *rota* is a string instrument, more especially a triangular harp-zither (cf. Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France 1100–1300* (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1987), pp. 122–4 and *passim*).
- 72 Cerquiglini, "*Un engin*", p. 219 (= Paris' edition, p. 69): 'Et qui la porroit mettre sur les orgues, sur cornemuses ou autres instruments, c'est sa droite nature'.
- 73 *Limburger Chronik*, p. 49, lines 7–10. Cf. Pirrò, *Histoire de la musique*, p. 57, and 'Musiciens allemands', p. 73.
- 74 *Limburger Chronik*, p. 36, lines 25–6: 'Item in der selben zit [i.e. 1351 – F.W.] sang man ein nuwe lit in Duschen landen, daz was gar gemeine zu pifen unde zu trompen unde zu aller freude. . .'; cf. also p. 47, line 4; p. 48, line 4; p. 53, line 16; p. 55, line 14; p. 56, line 16; p. 65, lines 1 and 19; p. 74, line 1; p. 75, line 14.
- 75 As I – erroneously, I fear – wrote in my article '*Dw welt*', p. 171. As Dr. C. Vellekoop (Utrecht) pointed out to me, it is hard to find medieval illustrations representing singers accompanied by *pifers*. Neither were their (loud) instruments appropriate for such a purpose. Cf. also Keith Polk, 'Voices and Instruments: Soloists and Ensembles in the 15th Century', *Early Music* (1990), 183.
- 76 Cf., for example, Maricarmen Gòmez, 'Minstrel Schools in the Late Middle Ages', *Early Music* (1990), 215, who points out that most of the rare instrumental pieces of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that survive were not new compositions but arrangements of the vocal versions. May we assume that, on the other hand, the music of the wind instrumentalists could influence that of the songs? Some remarks of Jammers on the melodies of the Gruuthuse manuscript seem to point in

that direction (Ewald Jammers, 'Die Melodien der Gruuthuse-Handschrift', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 25 (1973), 18-19).

77 Willaert, 'Minnelied als danslied', pp. 83-5.

78 *Die Gedichte Heinrich des Teichners*, no. 191, lines 59-62.

79 Willaert, '*Dw welt*', pp. 167-8. Tilemann Elhen von Wolfshagen quotes (at least) three rondeaux as well, two of which are incomplete (*ibid.*, pp. 157 and 161).

PART V

Religious literature

CHAPTER II

The saint and the world: the Middle Dutch 'Voyage of Saint Brendan'

Clara Strijbosch

In memory of Marlies, whose journey came to such a sudden end

Just like King Arthur, the Irish saint Brendan more than five hundred years after his death (c. 580) enjoyed considerable popularity as a protagonist in fictional narrative.¹ Besides his *Vita* three other texts about him were in circulation. The first, the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (hereafter cited as *Navigatio*), has been handed down in more than forty manuscripts and been translated into various languages, including Middle English and Middle Dutch. The original was probably written in Lotharingia between the eighth and tenth centuries.²

A few centuries later two other Brendan stories were written in a vernacular tongue. The first of these, *Le Voyage de saint Brendan* by Benedeit (which will not be discussed here), is a free, but not essentially different, version of the *Navigatio*. In addition, around 1150 an entirely independent Brendan story, *De reis van Sint Brandaan* (*The Voyage of Saint Brendan*, hereafter cited as *Voyage*)³ was composed in a Middle Frankish dialect, presumably in the Rhineland region. This Frankish *Voyage* was handed down in three versions: a Middle Dutch and a German text in verse, both extant in two manuscripts, and another German one in prose. All versions of the *Voyage* which have survived go back to a lost original of which the contents can be reconstructed quite satisfactorily despite differences in detail between the extant texts. The Middle Dutch version plays an important role in the tradition: apart from a few inserted elements it probably reflects the original Frankish *Voyage* quite well.⁴

The interrelation between the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage* is an enigmatic one. In both narratives an account is given of Brendan's voyage, during which he witnesses a variety of astounding natural

and supernatural phenomena. The partial similarities in episodes and motifs have led researchers to regard the *Navigatio* as the immediate and only source of the *Voyage*. However, it is an established fact that the author of the *Voyage* used motifs from various continental and Irish stories,⁵ and it is even doubtful whether he had the *Navigatio*-text in front of him at all while he was writing. Apart from remarkable parallels, the two texts also show quite a few differences with respect to contents, structure and atmosphere. For example, the author of the *Voyage* pays attention to aspects of social and physical reality that are quite dissimilar to those emphasized in the *Navigatio* by taking into account the cultural changes of his day. In this way he created an entirely new Brendan story. A comparison of *Navigatio* and *Voyage* will illustrate their complicated relationship.

In the Latin text Brendan undertakes a journey out of an ardent desire to find the *Terra repromissionis sanctorum* (the Promised Land of the Saints). For seven years he sails the endless expanse of the ocean, together with seventeen of his monks, three of whom disappear along the way. The voyage shows a cyclic course of events. Every year around the same time the travellers return to one of the four islands where they celebrate the important festivals of the church. The period before Easter is usually spent on a sheep island, Easter on the back of a fish, the time between Easter and Whitsuntide on a bird island, and Christmastime in an island monastery. Eventually they reach an island which turns out to be the Promised Land of the Saints they have been looking for. Near the centre of the island a river cuts through the land; here a young man with a nimbus forbids them to go any further. They return to Ireland and Brendan dies.

In the *Navigatio* Brendan is an abbot and saint of impeccable conduct. With an unfaltering faith in God and blessed with the gift of prophecy, he leads his monks to the Promised Land. How differently he behaves in the *Voyage*. Here we are told how he furiously casts the old book he is reading into the fire, refusing to accept the phenomena described in it as true. He cannot and will not accept the possible existence of a fish with a forest on its back, nor can he believe that Judas has a day off from hell on Sundays, and that underneath this world there might be another. After his burning of the book out of disbelief, one of God's angels orders him to take to the waves to see for himself 'what is true and what is a lie'. In addition to this he is charged to restore the burnt book by writing down the miracles he will see along the way. Brendan obeys. He

starts out, together with eighty⁶ of his monks, and with his own eyes he beholds a fish with a forest on its back, he sees Judas who is allowed to spend his Sundays outside hell, and he hears sounds from a world under this world. He sees and hears many other things besides. The *Voyage* displays a great interest in Creation and its marvels, much more so than the *Navigatio*. The purpose of Brendan's journey in the *Voyage* is not to reach the Promised Land, as in the *Navigatio*, but to restore Brendan's faith and to make him rewrite the burnt book. The differences between the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage* with respect to their contents, structure and atmosphere are considerable. On the other hand they are similar in their focus on the supernatural. The journey Brendan makes and the wonders he observes convey a spiritual and symbolic meaning in both stories. The 'island fish' is one of the natural phenomena Brendan encounters in both the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage*, and in both texts it can be provided with a spiritual meaning.

In the *Voyage*, at the very beginning of his journey, Brendan encounters one of the miracles he had been reading about in the book he burnt: the fish with a forest on its back.⁷ No sooner have the monks begun to prepare their meal on what they believe to be an island, when the ground under their feet sinks into the sea. They scarcely manage to reach their boat, where they praise the Lord for their rescue. Brendan observes that what they thought was an island presumably was a fish. This episode, with slightly different details, is also found in the *Navigatio*, and in both stories the island fish can be assigned a deeper meaning. The extremely popular *Physiologus*, the late classical work in which phenomena of the Creation are described and allegorized, says the following about the whale:

Physiologus spoke of a certain whale in the sea called the aspedoceleon that is exceedingly large like an island, heavier than sand, and is a figure of the devil. Ignorant sailors tie their ships to the beast as to an island and plant their anchors and stakes in it. They light their cooking fires on the whale but, when he feels the heat, he urinates and plunges into the depths, sinking all the ships. You also, O man, if you fix and bind yourself to the hope of the devil, he will plunge you along with himself into hell-fire.⁸

It is most likely that in the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage* the island fish not only functioned as a bizarre sea monster but also as a symbol of the devil on whom the ignorant pin their hopes, in vain. Just like the incident of the island fish, quite a few of the other incidents have a meaning which refers to sin and grace, to the presence of God and

the devil in Creation. Both texts abound in allusions to the supernatural.

Moreover, Brendan's voyage encompasses more than merely a journey through the world: it is a pilgrimage. The *Navigatio* was strongly inspired by the Irish *peregrini*-movement, the Irish form of asceticism in which a monk abandoned home and country and put out to sea in order to pass his life on an island or on the continent as a voluntary exile in the service of God. In the *Navigatio*, Brendan and his monks entrust themselves to the waves as *peregrini*, wandering in exile over the ocean, in search of the Promised Land.⁹ In the *Voyage*, Brendan is sent away to do penance for his sin, as was the case with many medieval sinners.¹⁰ But also in a deeper sense Brendan knew himself to be a pilgrim, a *viator in peregrinatione*. He is a stranger in a strange world, destined for the Heavenly Home.¹¹ According to both texts Brendan is governed by a strong desire for Heaven, prefigured in the *Navigatio* by the 'Promised Land', for which he searches for seven years. In the *Voyage*, God, out of love, grants Brendan a vision in which he sees angels carrying souls to Heaven. Instantly he understands where his destination lies. He expresses the wish to be allowed to return to his fatherland:

Doe bat die heere goede
Met eenen neerensten moede
Onsen eeweliken troost,
Diene dicken hadde verloost,
Dat hine saen ghesande
Weder te sinen lande.¹²

(So this good lord prayed earnestly to the eternal Provider of comfort, who had so often saved him, that He would quickly bring him back to his own country.)

This longing for his country, expressed immediately after beholding heaven, may have had spiritual connotations as well. The succession of his vision of Heaven and his longing for his homeland leads one to suspect that Brendan here voices the hope of soon being able to reach not only his terrestrial but also his celestial home. Both in the *Voyage* and in the *Navigatio* the end of his journey and the return to his native country are immediately followed by his death and his entry into Paradise. In this way Brendan's journey through the world coincides with what we hear of his earthly existence; it also becomes a symbolical journey through life.¹³ Indeed, both texts explicitly state that Brendan's voyage should be looked upon as a

pilgrimage, a journey of exile. At the end of his journey, a young man in the 'Promised Land' tells Brendan: 'The final day of your pilgrimage draws near so that you may sleep with your fathers',¹⁴ while in the final episode of the *Voyage* it says:

... die IX jaer ...
Dat hi was in allenden,
Daer hem God wilde zenden¹⁵

(... the nine years ... which he had spent wandering in exile where God had sent him)

Like any other Christian, Brendan was passing through a strange world on his way to the Heavenly Home.

Although this layer of symbolic meanings in the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage* produces a strong orientation towards the supernatural, attention is also given to earthly reality. The two texts, however, differ considerably with respect to the selected aspects of this reality.¹⁶

The *Navigatio* breathes a monastic atmosphere. Often, and sometimes at great length, monastic practices, prayers and the celebrating of church festivals are described. Also more practical matters associated with a *peregrinatio*, a pilgrimage across the sea, such as the building of a boat and the supply of food, are described with great accuracy. Reality as presented in the *Navigatio* is the reality of monks in the Irish *peregrinatio* movement. In accordance with this movement's traditional view that the world should be regarded as a place to be passed through, the text suggests that Brendan moves on to the 'Promised Land' without paying too much attention to the prodigies around him. But the very way in which he starts off his journey in the *Voyage* shows that, from the first lines on, the emphasis here is much more on Creation and its marvels. Brendan sets out not to find a Promised Land but to see with his own eyes that miraculous phenomena do indeed occur. Besides this he has been commissioned by God's angel to write a book about the things he sees on the way. Because of this motivation for his journey, the world in the *Voyage* is no longer merely an area to be passed through, but also a place worth looking at. Reality as described in the *Voyage* is totally different from that in the *Navigatio*. The change may be illustrated by the following episode, the essence of which is the same in both texts, but which has been worked out very differently.¹⁷

In the *Navigatio*, after his visit to the island fish, Brendan finds

himself in the 'Paradise of Birds', where he comes upon an enormous tree covered with white birds. When he asks who or what they are, one of them replies that they are fallen angels who, because they stayed neutral after Lucifer's rebellion, were separated from the angels who remained loyal to God. They roam around the skies, and on Sundays and holy days they assume the shape of a bird. This strange tale is followed by an elaborate description of the hymns the birds sing at particular hours of the day, with quotations of the first lines.

In the *Voyage* this episode has undergone such major changes that only the motifs of paradise and the neutral angels are still recognizable. Towards the end of his journey Brendan arrives in a delightful country, the *Multum bona terra*, where he and his monks find a splendid deserted castle. When they have viewed everything in it and are about to leave, the inhabitants suddenly come after them. They are the *Walscheranden*, hideous monsters with swine's heads, dog's paws and crane's necks, growling like bears and dressed in silk. They tell Brendan they were angels who did not take sides when Lucifer rebelled against God, and were therefore banished from Heaven. On account of their disloyalty, God punished them with repulsive appearances, but since they had no evil intentions he gave them a paradise-like land to live in. Yet they still long for Heaven.

In this *Walscheranden* episode the author of the *Voyage* bursts into an enthusiastic enumeration of the miraculous things Brendan sees. The castle of the *Walscheranden* is described with an abundance of detail: the wall, on which all kinds of amazing creatures are pictured, the crystal towers, the sapphire and glass floors, the beds with their silk mosquito nets, the birds and the fish in the garden. In short, a fairy-tale palace in the Oriental style. 'There never was anything built more beautiful and stronger than the castle Brendan saw that day. The monks feasted their eyes on all there was to see', the narrator sighs.¹⁸

One of Brendan's monks, who had succumbed to temptation by stealing a precious bridle in similar luxuriant surroundings earlier on in the story, feels highly uncomfortable in the castle and says, 'We ought to get away from here before we have trouble. If you ask me, there must be a lord of all these marvels you see here. And if they should see us, we shall not be able to escape.'¹⁹ With these words the author of the *Voyage* may have made him the mouthpiece of his own bad conscience. He presents Brendan as a penitent whose faith needs

to be restored, a pilgrim longing for the Heavenly Home. In the *Walscheranden* episode, however, he obviously allowed himself to be carried away by a worldly interest in wealth and wonders. Brendan and his monks seem to be led astray here as much as the pilgrim about whom St Augustine wrote the following words of caution:

Suppose we were wanderers who could not live in blessedness except at home, miserable in our wandering and desiring to end it and to return to our native country. We would need vehicles for land and sea which could be used to help us to reach our homeland, which is to be enjoyed. But if the amenities of the journey and the motion of the vehicles itself delighted us, and we were led to enjoy those things which we should use, we should not wish to end our journey quickly, and, entangled in a perverse sweetness, we should be alienated from our country, whose sweetness would make us blessed.²⁰

On his journey Brendan is threatened by the peril which lay in wait for every pilgrim: curiosity. Although in general this was not considered a sin, it degenerated too easily into the *vitium curiositatis*, the sinful curiosity, which is to be understood as 'any morally excessive and suspect interest in observing the world, seeking novel experiences, or acquiring knowledge for its own sake'.²¹ Excessive anxiety about worldly matters, elaborate speech or superfluous ornament also formed part of this *vitium curiositatis*.²² For centuries pilgrimage and *curiositas* were considered to be closely connected concepts, not only because travelling easily enticed man to excessive *curiositas*, but also because, conversely, the *vitium curiositatis* induced man to travel. Wandering, both physically and morally, was seen as a consequence of sinful *curiositas*. The pilgrim was supposed to behave like a stranger in a strange world. He was to keep away from the world as long as this world was considered to be alienated from God on account of the fall of man. Excessive worldly inquisitiveness endangered one's soul.²³ Precisely in the period when the *Voyage* is thought to have been created, however, an increasing curiosity about the world manifested itself, and the border between right and wrong *curiositas* was not always clear. During the 'Renaissance of the twelfth century', as this age of enormous changes has been called, there was an unprecedented expansion of physical and intellectual frontiers.²⁴ Crusades, greater prosperity, urbanization, an interest in new intellectual ventures and the (re)discovery of Arabic and Greek science brought new worlds and new ways of thinking within reach. This first introduction to previously unknown areas of living and

thinking gave rise not only to enthusiasm but also to insecurity. Created nature, which for a long time it had been allowable to study only in so far as its order revealed the presence of God, became a subject of curiosity and study in its own right.²⁵ More rational minds searched for the laws of nature which explained its workings, without immediately resorting to direct divine interference. They refused to regard Creation any longer as merely a manifestation of the supernatural or as a collection of miracles, but looked upon it also as a well-organized and intelligible whole. A serious question was to what extent phenomena created by man should still be ascribed to God. M.-D. Chenu gives the example of the twelfth-century philosopher Master Gilbert, who distinguishes three aspects: the divine act of creating, the functioning of nature and the things created by man, with all three being part of the divine governance of the world. Man, in this case, is the executor. 'God, therefore, is the sole author of all things; but there are different ways of making'.²⁶ Such statements were not always received favourably. A merely rational explanation of the functioning of nature was inadmissible to a Christian way of thinking according to which Creation should only be studied in so far as it revealed the presence of God's wisdom. Furthermore, researchers of natural phenomena repeatedly collided with Scripture, which in every respect was regarded as sacrosanct. As a result, the rationalists were time and again accused of profanity and heresy, but these incriminations could not silence the continual recurring of questions about the relation between nature and miracles, faith and science.

By no means all of the twelfth-century people who were interested in Creation were as radical as the rational natural scientists, but an interest in Creation and its phenomena, regarded as separate from their supernatural meaning, also caused problems for less audacious minds. The author of the *Voyage* seems to hover on the border between the two conflicting schools of thought. On the one hand there is the orthodox view of the world as a land alienated from God, which one had to journey through while keeping one's eye fixed on the hereafter, and on the other there is the new interest in what is particular about Creation. He resorted to symbolism, this being a way of describing Creation which for centuries had accommodated irreconcilable world views.²⁷ Paul's words 'Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur' (Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity –

however invisible – have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made; Rom. 1:20) were the source of inspiration for the idea that God can be known by His creatures. In the symbolic way of thinking, Creation was seen as a book written by the hand of God, in which the individual creatures are like images 'revealing the wisdom of the invisible things of God'.²⁸ Within this view the study of Creation was defensible, as long as its creatures were regarded as signs of God's presence. According to St Augustine the true pilgrim, during his passage through the world, should look at the phenomena only in the light of God's intentions for Creation: '... in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the "invisible things" of God "being understood by the things that are made" may be seen, that is, so that by the means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual'.²⁹

Both the *Voyage* and the *Navigatio* were written in a symbolic tradition which saw nature as a collection of signs referring to Christian truths. The creatures Brendan encounters suggest God's presence and grace as well as that which alienates man from God, namely Satan and sin. Creation in the *Navigatio* and the *Voyage* is imbued with the supernatural, and what is more, God participates directly in both stories. Through His intervention, Brendan and his monks are time and again rescued from aggressive monsters and devils. If creatures presented as indications of the supernatural divert the reader's attention from the world this is even more true of the presentation of Brendan's journey as a pilgrimage, a journey of exile or penance, which will ultimately lead to arrival in the Heavenly haven.

The passages of the *Navigatio* which may be labelled realistic concern *peregrinatio* and monastic life, in other words, earthly concerns which focus on the hereafter. On the other hand, together with and underlying the presentation of the world as a realm uniquely orientated towards the supernatural, in the *Voyage* an undercurrent can be noticed which reveals an unmistakable interest in the world itself. The author of the *Voyage* has paid attention to aspects of Creation which are not directly linked to higher things. His elaborate description of the *Walscheranden* castle exceeds all the bounds of a symbolic study of Creation. In his description of the natural world there are even things which are beyond the Creator's direct rule.

The copper images of animals and people in the wall of the *Walscheranden* castle move as though they were alive. They are driven by water power:

In midden dien borghe vloot
Een riviere wel groot,
Die al dwilt dede omme gaen,
Dat niet stille mochte staen.³⁰

(In the middle of the castle ran a fast-flowing river whose powerful waters drove round the beasts in unceasing circular motion.)

Water power driving images in a wall: such a miracle of twelfth-century technique implies a step in the direction of a controllable Creation, the working of which is explained by the laws of nature and human technique, not by the Creator's immediate supervision.³¹ The author of the *Voyage* undoubtedly anticipated that his interest in the working of Creation might cause problems for him. He makes the *Walscheranden* state clearly that it was God who gave them the land, so that land and castle do indeed come under His control, even if this control is to some extent indirect.

In this episode the dilemma twelfth-century man was confronted with, if he was interested in the world around him, becomes visible: if God is the creator of all things and if He is omnipresent in His Creation, does that mean that what man creates is also part of His Creation? What is the range of His presence? Is He actually the maker of all that is visible in the world?

The last of these questions became particularly pressing because of reports from travellers from distant countries about fairy-tale palaces and marvels of technique, but even more on account of stories about strange peoples who were said to live at the other end of the world. In one matter particularly, the presence of God in Creation was an insoluble problem for the author of the *Voyage*. It was a matter which in the course of time had repeatedly led to conflict: the existence of Antipodes.

By tradition Antipodes lived on the other side of the world, in the southern habitable zone; this was separated from our zone, in the northern hemisphere, by an impenetrable belt of heat. As early as the first centuries of Christianity antipodism was denounced as a heresy by the Church Fathers. The existence of such an inhabited southern hemisphere was considered to be incompatible with what the Bible said.³² Still, accounts of Antipodes kept cropping up and the author of the *Voyage* could not escape the magnetism of these

intriguing creatures either. In the book Brendan burned he had been reading about 'another world under this one where it is night during our daytime'.³³ By the end of his journey he reaches a place that is windless and extremely hot.³⁴ He picks up sounds from under the surface of the water which lead him to suspect that there is human life down there: he hears bells chiming, men and women dancing and dogs barking; yet he cannot discern anything. When he gives the order to drop the anchor, something grabs hold of it. In the end, without having caught a single glimpse of the underwater inhabitants, Brendan has the anchor cable cut because there is no more room in his book to write about any further adventures.

This episode seems to be based on the idea of 'another world under this one', that is, it is a description of the antipode-continent which Brendan at first did not believe existed. The sounds under the surface of the sea indicate that the Antipodes might well be a reality. The question is whether the author of the *Voyage* has allowed the underwater people to be heard and not seen because he could not visualize them, or whether he realized that a description of the Antipodes would bring him dangerously close to heresy. In any case, the account of the underwater people points to a curiosity about the phenomena of Creation which went further than could be considered strictly necessary for the salvation of the soul. It went even further than official theology approved of. The author of the *Voyage*, however, does not presume to present plainly and without restrictions such a controversial phenomenon as the Antipodes as part of God's Creation. He has Brendan cut the anchor cable, without showing the saint even a trace of the underwater people. The reader remains uncertain about the identity or indeed the existence of these peculiar creatures.

Brendan's curiosity about the miracles of Creation is explicitly stemmed by a short episode at the end of the *Voyage*.³⁵ The saint meets a little man, the size of a thumb, who is sitting on a leaf and is trying to measure the sea by dripping water into a little bowl with a pen. As soon as the bowl is full he empties it and starts all over again. When Brendan remarks that his task seems impossible to him, the little man replies: 'It is as impossible to me to measure the sea before Judgement Day as it is for you to behold all of God's miracles. Return home where your monks await you!' Brendan takes this lesson to heart and sails back to Ireland. He dies and is admitted into Paradise.

The fictional episode of the little man on the leaf contains the

same warning against the perils of *curiositas* as the passage in *The City of God* in which St Augustine lists an enormous number of marvels and concludes: 'If I chose to recall them and mention them all, would there ever be an end to this work? Now these signs are, apparently, contrary to nature. For us, however, they have a message. [They] ought to "show" us that God is to do what he prophesied that he would do.' People are not capable of explaining all these miracles, 'simply because the feeble reasoning powers of mortal minds are defeated by these, as by other similar wonderful works of God'.³⁶ By studying Creation people can experience God's presence, but what really matters is not the number of miraculous phenomena one beholds, but faith. At the end of his journey Brendan's attention is no longer diverted by the marvels of the world. He has learned that witnessing these is superfluous for those who believe and he returns to his native country.

Through the little man the author of the *Voyage* makes his readers realize that seeing the world's miracles is not sinful, but pointless. In the meantime he has already told his readers many a miraculous adventure. In his moralistic conclusion he resembles those who warn against sinful *curiositas* by giving an endless recital of the subjects one should not digress on; Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, in his warning against the *curiositas* of exulting in fanciful ornamentations of monasteries, wonders: 'To what purpose are those unclean apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs, those half-men, those striped tigers, those fighting knights, those hunters winding their horns? Many bodies are there seen under one head, or again, many heads to a single body [etc., etc.].'³⁷ Here Bernard gives an elaborate description of what one should not wish to see. Similarly, the author of the *Voyage* makes his readers aware that all those things he has related – and which they probably enjoyed hearing – are of no consequence. Like Bernard's enumeration, the entire *Voyage* is an example of *praeteritio*, the speaking of things one does not wish to speak of.³⁸

Through the episode of the little man on the leaf the author changes the course of the story, as a result of which all preceding episodes are put in an entirely different light.³⁹ The little man exemplifies what man's conduct in God's Creation should be like, but he has also provided the writer with an excuse to tell his story. The warning against excessive *curiositas* as the conclusion of a series of episodes makes it possible not to have to choose between denounc-

ing the world and curiosity about the world. The *Voyage of Saint Brendan* is a story that is best left unread by true believers. To more sceptical minds it offers the possibility of being converted as a result of living through a fascinating array of adventures.

NOTES

- 1 This article is the result of NWO-project 301-177-047. Comments by W. P. Gerritsen and R. van de Kraats on an earlier version and the help of B. Besamusca and P. Werdekker are gratefully acknowledged.
- 2 For the *Navigatio* I have made use of C. Selmer, ed., *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis: from Early Latin Manuscripts* (Notre Dame: University Press, Indiana, 1959). In the introduction on pp. xvii-xix we find a survey of data on the historical Brendan, on pp. xxviii-xxix information on the time and place of origin of the *Navigatio*. For an early dating, see D. N. Dumville, 'Two Approaches to the dating of "Nauigatio Sancti Brendani"', *Studi Medievali* 29/1 (1988), 87-102. English translations of the *Navigatio* are to be found in *The Age of Bede*, trans. J. F. Webb, ed. D. H. Farmer. Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), and in J. O'Meara, *The Voyage of Saint Brendan: Journey to the Promised Land* (Mountrath, Portlaoise: The Dolmen Press, 1978).
- 3 The Middle Dutch manuscripts Comburg (hereafter cited as C) and Hulthem (hereafter cited as H) were published by E. Bonebakker, ed., *Van Sente Brandane: Naar het Comburgsche en het Hulthemsche Handschrift*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Gebr. Binger, 1894), the Middle High German manuscript (M), the Low German (N) and one of the prose texts (P) by C. Schröder, ed., *Sanct Brandan: ein lateinischer und drei deutsche Texte* (Erlangen: Eduard Besold, 1871). Line numbers in this article refer to the aforementioned editions, quotations were taken from C in the Bonebakker edition. An edition of a text composed of C and H, with an introduction and a translation in verse in modern Dutch was prepared by M. Draak, ed., *De reis van Sinte Brandaan*, edition, introduction and comments by Maartje Draak, versification by Bertus Aafjes (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1949). Prose translations of Middle Dutch quotations were taken from Peter King's rendering of the poem, to appear in W. P. Gerritsen, D. Edel and M. de Kreek, *The World of Saint Brendan*, trans. by P. K. King (in preparation; hereafter cited as 'prose translation'). An edition and translation of Benedeit's adaptation are available in I. Short and B. Merrilees, ed. and trans., *Benedeit: Le Voyage de Saint Brandan* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1984).
- 4 For place and time of origin, and the mutual relationship of the Middle Dutch and German versions, see W. Meyer, 'Die Überlieferung der Deutschen Brandanlegende' (Ph.D. thesis, Göttingen, 1918), Part I, 'Der Prosatext', pp. 20 and 125; about the relation of the Middle Dutch text to the original, see p. 27.

- 5 On the relation between the *Navigatio*, the *Voyage* and Irish stories, see among others W. Haug, 'Vom Imram zur Aventure-Fahrt: zur Frage nach der Vorgeschichte der hochhöfischen Epenstruktur', *Wolfram-Studien* 1 (1970), 264–98, esp. pp. 270–1 and 282, and also *Strukturen als Schlüssel zur Welt: kleine Schriften zur Erzählliteratur des Mittelalters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), pp. 279–408.
- 6 H and N do not mention any numbers, M mentions 70 persons on board, P 12 monks and a number of other members of the crew.
- 7 C 295–337, M 165–99, N 123–49, P 165, prose translation chapter 7. The episode does not occur in H, of which the first 323 verses are lost. Selmer, ed., *Navigatio*, chapter 10, pp. 20–1; O'Meara, *The Voyage*, pp. 18–19.
- 8 Quotation from the *Physiologus*-translation by M. J. Curley, *Physiologus* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 45–6. For the history of the *Physiologus* text and a bibliography of editions and translations, see Curley, pp. ix–xliii. This similarity does not necessarily mean that the *Physiologus* was the source of this episode in the *Navigatio* and/or the *Voyage*. The story of the island fish had spread far and wide.
- 9 On *peregrinatio*, see K. Hughes, 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Irish Pilgrimage', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 11 (1960), 143–51; on *peregrinatio* in connection with the *Navigatio*, Selmer, ed., *Navigatio*, pp. xxii–xxiv.
- 10 The pilgrimage as a journey of penance was quite well known. See C. K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: the Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 46.
- 11 Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage*, p. 42: '... every medieval Christian knew himself to be a *viator in peregrinatione*, knew he was homeless on earth ...'. On life as a pilgrimage, see Zacher, p. 50. For the history of the symbolic interpretation of voyage and pilgrimage, see F. C. Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire: a Study of Theme and Genre in Medieval Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 11–85. On the terms *viator* and *peregrinus*, see G. B. Ladner, 'Homo Viator: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order', *Speculum* 42 (1967), 233–59, esp. pp. 235–7.
- 12 C 1145–50, H 1090–5, M 818–22, not in N, P; prose translation chapter 26.
- 13 Haug's 'Vom Imram', pp. 289–90, on the *Navigatio*: 'Brandans Meerfahrt als Bild der Lebensreise ...'. On the *Voyage* as a journey of exile, see L. Peeters 'Wade, Hildebrand and Brendan', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 3 (1972), 25–65, esp. p. 50.
- 14 O'Meara, *The Voyage*, p. 69, Selmer, ed., *Navigatio*, p. 80, lines 29–30.
- 15 C 2259–62, H 2183–5 (the German texts have a different formulation); prose translation chapter 39 (with 'abroad' for 'in exile').
- 16 On symbolism and realism in the *Navigatio*, see J. Larmat, 'Le réel et l'imaginaire dans la *Navigatio de saint Brandan*', in *Voyage – Quête –*

- Pèlerinage dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévales* (Aix-en Provence: CUERMA, 1976), pp. 171–82.
- 17 *Navigatio*, chapter 11; O'Meara, *The Voyage*, pp. 19–25. Selmer, ed., *Navigatio*, pp. 22–8. *Voyage* C 1600–2068, H 1542–996, M 1113–417, N 826–985, P 182–8; prose translation, chapters 32–4.
 - 18 Prose translation chapter 33. C 1774–80, H 1700–6, M 1231–6, N 895–6, P 184.
 - 19 Prose translation chapter 33. C 1793–1800, H 1717–24, M 1237–41, N 897–901, not in P.
 - 20 Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), pp. 9–10. For the Latin text, see *Sancti Augustini Opera*, Pars IV, 1: *De doctrina christiana*, ed. Joseph Martin. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 32 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1962), I, 4 (p. 8).
 - 21 Quoted from Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage*, p. 4. For general information on *curiositas* and pilgrimage, see this work, esp. pp. 3–59. On *curiositas*, see E. Peters, 'Libertas Inquirendi and the Vitium Curiositatis in Medieval Thought', in G. Makdisi, ed., *La Notion de liberté au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1985), pp. 89–97, esp. pp. 90–1, and H. Blumenberg, *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde*, 4th edn (Frankfurt-on-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), esp. pp. 103–44.
 - 22 R. Newhauser, 'Towards a History of Human Curiosity: a Prolegomenon to its Medieval Phase', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 56 (1982), 559–75, rightly calls attention to this aspect of the *vitium curiositatis* (which, however, does not seem very important in the *Voyage*). He pleads for a clear distinction between *curiositas* and the *vitium curiositatis* (p. 567). Although in principle he is right, it is precisely a text like the *Voyage* that shows how vague and blurred the border between right and wrong *curiositas* must have been.
 - 23 On the connection between wandering and *curiositas*, see Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage*, p. 162, n. 7. On *peregrinatio* and the world as a place alienated from God, see Ladner, 'Homo Viator', pp. 234–8, and Gardiner, *Pilgrimage of Desire*, pp. 12–14. The source of inspiration here was Paul: 'As long as we are in the body we are in exile from God' (2 Cor:6).
 - 24 I shall mention only a few of the numerous works on twelfth-century cultural and social changes: C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927; 5th edn, 1971); R. L. Benson and G. Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). Furthermore, I made use of R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970; rpt. 1984), pp. 29–60. For the intellectual changes see esp. P. Dronke, ed., *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).
 - 25 On the discovery of nature as an object of study and the conflicts that attend this, see E. J. Dijksterhuis, *The Mechanisation of the World Picture*, trans. by C. Dikshoorn (Oxford University Press, 1969) pp. 89–125;

- M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on new Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, sel., trans. and ed. J. Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 1-48; T. Stiefel, *The Intellectual Revolution in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), esp. pp. 78-108.
- 26 Quotation in Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, pp. 39-40. Probably the philosopher Gilbert de la Porrée is meant.
- 27 See particularly Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, pp. 99-145.
- 28 Hugh of St Victor, *De operibus tribus dierum*, *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 176, 814B (included wrongly in PL 176 as the seventh book of the *Didascalicon*).
- 29 St Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (trans. Robertson), p. 10; *De doctrina christiana* (CCSL 32), i, 4 (p. 8).
- 30 C 1681-4, H 1615-18, not in M, N, P; prose translation chapter 33.
- 31 A technical explanation and a literary history of the wall with the moving images can be found in L. Okken, *Das goldene Haus und die goldene Laube: wie die Poesie ihren Herren das Paradies einrichtete*. Amsterdam: Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur 72 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), pp. 18-45.
- 32 V. I. J. Flint, 'Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment', *Viator* 15 (1984), 65-80. On the rejection of this idea by the Church Fathers, see Dijksterhuis, *The Mechanisation*, p. 93. The most authoritative rejection was St Augustine's, for example in *De Civitate Dei* xvi,9.
- 33 Prose translation chapter 2; C 37-41, M 29-38, P 163, not in H (lost), N.
- 34 C 2151-2202, H 2081-2130, M 1456-1512, P 188-9, not in N; prose translation chapter 37.
- 35 C 2069-2110, H 1997-2042, M 1703-58, not in N, P; prose translation chapter 35. In the Dutch version the episode with the little man on the leaf occurs before the antipodes, presumably as a result of textual corruption. The order in M (little man after antipodes) seems to be the correct one.
- 36 Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. H. Bettenson, intr. D. Knowles (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 937 and 983 (translation of Augustine, *De civitate Dei* xxi,5 and 8, CCSL 58, pp. 764-6 and 773).
- 37 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem*, part 3 of *S. Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Ed. Cistercienses, 1963), p. 106. Translation borrowed from E. Holt, ed., *A Documentary History of Art*, vol. 1: *The Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: University Press, 1957), p. 21.
- 38 See J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 257, for a description of this phenomenon in Bernard of Clairvaux's work.

- 39 For a similar process in the (twelfth-century) *Alexander* romance, see W. Haug, 'Struktur und Geschichte: ein literaturtheoretisches Experiment an mittelalterlichen Texten', *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift* 54 (1973), 129-52, esp. pp. 131-7, and also *Strukturen als Schlüssel*, pp. 236-56.

CHAPTER 12

Hadewijch: mystic poetry and courtly love

J. Reynaert

Three fourteenth-century manuscripts in the Brabantine language have preserved a most remarkable collection of religious texts from about the middle of the thirteenth century, to be ascribed to a woman mystic by the name of Hadewijch. The corpus consists of fourteen *Visions*, thirty-one *Letters* addressed to friends or followers, sixteen *Didactic Poems*, mostly in rhyming couplets, and forty-five highly sophisticated *Poems in Stanzas*. The *Poems in Stanzas* in particular have presented quite a problem to literary historians. When the German scholar F. J. Mone, the first to have rediscovered Hadewijch's writings after four centuries of almost complete oblivion, mentioned these poems in his *Survey* of the ancient literature of the Low Countries (1838), he rightly observed that the love which they pay tribute to is 'spiritualized towards the divine', but at the same time he still classified them as *weltliche Minnelieder*, 'worldly love-songs', along with, for instance, the songs of Duke John I of Brabant. This uncertainty is quite understandable: it has in fact remained characteristic of Hadewijch studies up to the present day. Hadewijch's *Poems in Stanzas* indeed bear such a striking resemblance to the worldly love-poetry of their time that one must really look very closely to perceive a difference, if there is any. The similarity not only applies to the poetic structure (a 'nature opening' at the beginning and a *tornada*-like closing at the end of the poem; stanzas characterized by the well-known tripartite structure of troubadour poetry and often linked by 'concatenating' anaphora) but also to the overall rhetoric, imagery and phraseology.

This borrowing of a profane courtly model for communicating a religious 'content' has hitherto been unanimously considered an invention of Hadewijch and frequently even the hallmark of her artistic genius. In that respect her *Poems in Stanzas*, such is the general consensus, hold a unique place in the history of western

literature. It is my purpose in this study not so much to oppose this view (which certainly contains *some* degree of truth), as to reconsider it critically and perhaps to amend it. A reassessment of some of the prevailing opinions on the social and cultural backgrounds of Hadewijch's writings may, anyhow, help us to obtain a sharper picture of her place in literary history.

SOCIAL VS. LITERARY BACKGROUNDS

Except for a few quite vague and mostly still uncertain elements which can be inferred from her writings (essentially that she *may* have been the leader of a Brabantine beguine community around the middle of the thirteenth century), we know in fact nothing at all of Hadewijch as a historical figure.

It has none the less been generally assumed that she was of noble birth. The mere fact that she had adopted the idiom of the courtly song and in doing so often (but inevitably?) referred to the feudal aristocratic society to which the genre owes its origin, has certainly caused this conjecture to be widely accepted. It is evident that the *Poems in Stanzas* abound in images referring to the court and to feudal society. To conclude from this, however, that 'it is clear from her choice of images that she belonged to the upper strata of that society'¹ still seems somewhat premature. It has, in the first place, been convincingly demonstrated that the images under discussion are not so much drawn from courtly *life* as from courtly *literature*. Furthermore, it is easily overlooked by students of thirteenth-century vernacular mysticism that many of the images and motifs which *seemingly* connect the writings of those mystics with contemporary courtly life and literature had in fact long been part of the religious tradition itself.

It may be interesting, in order to illustrate the intricacy of the literary problem under discussion, to consider one of the very deceptive traps of this kind which the writings of Hadewijch contain. When, for instance, in the sixth stanza of her twenty-third Song Hadewijch writes:

Haddic mijn hoghe geslachte bedacht
Ic hadde edelen ghedachten gheslacht
Ende mi der minnen al ghegheven

(If I had thought of my noble birth, I would have given birth to noble thoughts And would have given myself all to Love)²

it is evident that the 'noble birth' (*hoghe geslachte*) which is referred to should not necessarily be taken in a literal, 'autobiographical' sense. But one could still guess, as did T. M. Guest, that 'even so, it is a phrase that would come naturally only to one of high birth'.³ The precise point is, however, that the phrase did *not* come to Hadewijch 'naturally'. Indeed, it is in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux that one can find the most appropriate frame of reference for understanding the passage. According to Bernard's exemplarist doctrine the primal nobility of the soul had to be recovered by restoring sinful man to the image and likeness of God, which was his original being; and this nobility must therefore in the first place be 'remembered'. The idea is very strikingly stated in Bernard's homily *De primordiis, mediis et novissimis*, the twelfth sermon 'de diversis':

do not then forget, now that you have sunk in the mire, that you are the image of God; and be ashamed that you have masked that image with an alien likeness. Bear in mind your primal nobility, and be ashamed that you have sunk so deep.⁴

'Bear in mind your nobility': *memor esto nobilitatis tuae*. Far from being indicative of any worldly nobility, and perhaps even in opposition to the vanity of worldly honours, Hadewijch's *hoghe geslachte* in fact evokes the whole system of religious thought attached to the concept of *memoria*, one of the three faculties of the soul by which the Trinity is reflected in man, a notion which played an essential role in twelfth-century Christian mysticism.

It is, on the other hand, a well-known fact or at least a unanimously accepted view⁵ that Bernard of Clairvaux also played a decisive role in propagating the *erotic* representation of spiritual love: indeed, a considerable number of historians are agreed in attributing the whole current of late medieval 'bridal mysticism' to his teachings. The question inevitably arises then about how far the phenomenon of Hadewijch's mystic love-poetry (apart from its purely formal aspects) can be explained, or at least be understood, in the light of Bernard's idea of 'divine love'.

THE MEANING OF MINNE

The traditional, 'orthodox' view, represented by the authoritative J. van Mierlo, that Hadewijch's concept of *Minne* (Love) can be identified exactly with the 'divine Love' of the theologians, has in recent times been questioned from different points of view. It has, for

example, been observed that this identification of *Minne* with God or with divine Love is in fact sustained by only a very limited number of passages in the poems. In by far the majority of instances where *Minne* appears as a personified being it is not evident at all that this personification is to be directly related to God or Christ. It would seem to be, rather, a representation of Love as a 'feeling': the feeling experienced by the loving human subject.⁶

As *Minne*, however, also appears in the role of the *object* of the poet's desire, neither can it readily be reduced to the mystic's own feelings or experiences exclusively. If this were the case, the *Poems in Stanzas* would – as T. M. Guest correctly stated – offer 'a remarkable monument of self-preoccupation, if not solipsism'.⁷ In addition to being the subject's own emotion of love, *Minne* apparently also represents the source, the cause of that emotion. Rather than equating this cause with God, certain critics have thought it more appropriate *not* to fill in its identity and to understand the word *Minne* as a proper name, referring to some superhuman being, incomprehensible by normal standards: 'a power, a supreme being, the essence of whose nature is Love'.⁸

Another approach to the problem would be to emphasize the fact that *Minne* in all the details of its personified appearances bears a striking resemblance to the personification of Love in the secular literature of the time and therefore to consider it as a 'kind', as the highest possible kind of courtly love: a courtly love directed towards God. This idea, which I proposed in my study on Hadewijch's imagery,⁹ and which is in fact not fundamentally different from Guest's view (is the secular personification of love anything other than 'a power, a supreme being, the essence of whose nature is Love?'), seemed to me to be more precise than the bare 'proper name' theory.

F. Willaert, finally, in his discussion of the topic, pointed out that Hadewijch's concept of *Minne*, due precisely to the fact that it is personified, combines both psychological and ethical features in one: as a figure of speech medieval personification endows the personified idea with authority and power, makes it, so to speak, the incarnation of a standard. As a consequence, *Minne* can be interpreted at the same time as personally experienced love and as Love in an absolute sense. And for Willaert this Love, with regard to Hadewijch's teaching as a whole, can only be *Godsliefde*, 'divine Love'.¹⁰

It would of course be absurd to deny that Hadewijch's *Minne* ultimately refers to 'divine Love', if this 'ultimately' is understood as 'logically' or 'according to religious doctrine'. In this sense *Minne* is, obviously, 'divine Love', as most abstract notions in Hadewijch's texts – like Reason (*redene*), Truth (*waerheit*), Faith (*trouwe*) – are 'ultimately' *divine* Reason etc., inasmuch as all these concepts are in the end ontologically anchored in God. Psychologically or phenomenologically speaking, however, I fear that to label Hadewijch's *Minne* as 'divine Love' and nothing more is not precise enough, as it leaves too much room for the projection of our own, modern conception of love into the medieval mystic's world of emotions. The tenor of the claim which I made in my work on Hadewijch's imagery was that, judging from textual appearances (and what else do we have to rely on?) Hadewijch experienced her love (of God naturally) with the mentality and the sensibility of contemporary courtly love: a sensibility in which the personification of Love represented primarily a frustration, a lack, rather than the idea of fulfilment and 'being connected', which is predominant in the concept of love in Christian spirituality.

As is clear from his treatise *De diligendo Deo*, Bernard conceived love as a 'natural affection' (one of the four generally distinguished: love, fear, joy and sorrow), which does not have to abandon its human nature to become 'divine'. Divine love is simply the highest possible, but in the end also the 'most natural', form of human love.¹¹ There is, to my knowledge, no such thing in twelfth-century literature as a 'divine love' which would be *essentially* different from other, 'human', kinds of love such as, for instance, parental, marital, brotherly love. This gradual continuity between human and divine love was indeed so self-evident that mystic writers could without any difficulty borrow models from human affective life to give form to their conception of man's loving relationship with God. And it is in fact the type of model which they select, rather than the 'divine' character of their love itself, which provides the phenomenological shape and colour.

Evidently, it does make a difference whether man's love for God is thought of essentially as the affection of a son towards his father, a servant towards his master, a bride towards her bridegroom or a wife towards her husband. In fact all of these models (and others) were used by religious authors to represent the different aspects of spiritual love. But in Bernard's *Sermons on the Song of Songs* the focus of

this allegorically outlined phenomenology is clearly to be found in the bridal and marital area, not excluding even the maternal aspects that come with it.¹² Modern literary historians, it seems to me, often exaggerate the importance of the erotic element in Bernard's commentaries. Some of his sermons do, it is true, contain poignant articulations of the desire and the frenzy of love, of the painful insatiability which the longing for God inspires in the Bride. But not only is the phenomenon quite rare, it has besides often been overlooked that the texts involved do not apply to the loving soul, but to the 'Bride of Christ' which is the Church.¹³ The ecclesiological element in Bernard's sermons is on the whole much more prominent than most of the modern literature on the subject seems to infer. And where the individual soul does come into the picture, the setting is distinctly matrimonial, the psychology is 'bridal', not 'amorous': fulfilment is at hand, or at least present to the mind, desire is 'well ordered', the fury of love is tempered by reason. Although of course such elements of rationality and measure are, as far as the *doctrine* is concerned, not alien to Hadewijch either, the distance which separates her from Bernard in this respect cannot reasonably be denied.

Gilson's discussion of the relation between Bernard's mysticism and courtly love (on the whole, it has to be admitted, a somewhat narrow-minded and too obviously defensive discussion, to be corrected with, for instance, J. Leclercq's *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France*¹⁴) at least provides us with a few litmus-tests to indicate the contrast. When Gilson, for example, points out that the disinterestedness of courtly love is only relative, exemplifying this by Thibault de Champagne's complaint that 'S'amor vosist guerredonner autant / Come elle puet, mult fust ses nons a droit' (If Love would reward as much as she should, then she would bear her name rightly), it is indeed obvious that such requests for reward will not readily be found in Bernard's prose. The thought, however, that true Love should always reward (*lonen*) the lover in the end is not alien to Hadewijch. Similarly, when Thibault, once hope has gone, speedily makes plans to get rid of his love ('Si je de li me poïsse partir / Mel me venist qu'estre sires de France' (If I could take leave of her, it would be better for me than to be king of France)), this is of course in sharp contrast with the mystic's attitude: 'On n'a jamais entendu saint Bernard souhaiter d'être débarrassé de l'amour de Dieu' (One never hears St Bernard wish to be relieved of God's love).¹⁵ But here again Hadewijch should rather be in the category of the *trouvère*.

The following quotation from poem 21, in which the mystic turns away from Love in disappointment, may serve as an illustration of both the reward-motif and the parting-motif as formulated by Hadewijch:

Ic gheve der minnen orlof nu ende altoes.
 Die wille, volghe haren hove; Mi es wel wee ghesbiet.
 Ic waende gheweest sijn vrouwe int hof sint icse ierst coes;
 Ic leide al toe in love; Ic en caen ghevolghen niet.
 Nu scinen mi hare lone
 Ghelijc den scordioene,
 Dat toent scone ghelaet,
 Ende na so sere verslaet,
 Ay, wat meynen selke ghetoene?

(I bid farewell to Love now and forever. He who will may follow her court; as for me, I have had too much woe. Since I first chose her, I expected to be the lady of her court; I did everything with praise: I cannot hold out.

Now her rewards
 Seem to me like the scorpion
 That shows a beautiful appearance
 And afterwards strikes so cruelly.
 Alas! What does such a show mean?)¹⁶

To some extent of course all of this is rhetoric and poetic cliché. But it *does* reveal a distinctive attitude towards love. It is not so much an attitude of 'interestedness', however, as would have to be inferred from Gilson's argument: on the contrary, it is rather an attitude which conceives loving not as marital reciprocity, but as an erotic desire which has to be sublimated into an enduring 'servitude' to the ideal of Love.

The point I am making here has in fact already been formulated in more general terms by T. Hunt, who distinguishes two currents in the medieval literature inspired by the Song of Songs, depending on whether the Christian idea of charity (*agape*) was combined with a conception of love as *Eros* or as *Philia*:

Eros is represented by a literary phenomenology of love drawn from Ovid whose imagery facilitated the recognition and description of love in its human physical reality. *Philia* was transmitted in the Ciceronian tradition of *amicitia*, laying its emphasis, not on desire and pursuit, but on mutuality, reciprocation and response.¹⁷

The Cistercians, in Hunt's view, represent the latter trend. Although some erotic elements from the Canticle inevitably perco-

lated through to Bernard's text, on the whole his commentary on the relation between Bride and Bridegroom can adequately be characterized as a fusion of *philia* and *agape*, not of *agape* and *eros*.

When, as in Hadewijch's case, the *erotic* approach was no longer applied to the traditional allegory involving the Virgin Mary or the Church as a bride, but to the personal relation between man (or, *a fortiori*, woman) and God, a completely new kind of mysticism was bound to take shape, which it would be convenient once and for all to distinguish clearly from Bernard's 'bridal mysticism' as love-mysticism or *Minne*-mysticism.

MYSTICISM AND COURTLY LOVE

It would be tempting, but again premature, to consider this individual *eros* element in Hadewijch's mysticism as a direct import from contemporary courtly literature. As a matter of fact, even if the erotic current in medieval mysticism cannot be traced back to Bernard of Clairvaux himself, it does already manifest itself in twelfth-century spirituality.

The phenomenon – which has not been mapped out yet: its history remains to be written – demonstrates, as far as I can see, two main centres of gravity: one in the second half of the twelfth century, with such writings as Richard of St Victor's *De IV gradibus violentae caritatis*,¹⁸ the *Epistola ad Severinum de caritate*,¹⁹ the continuation of Bernard's sermons on the Cantic by Gilbert of Hoyland (written 1154–72)²⁰ and, of course, the commentary on the Song of Songs by Landeric of Wabban (1176–81);²¹ the other in the second half of the thirteenth century, with Hadewijch, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and others.

It would be interesting, among many other questions arising from this neglected domain of literary history, to verify whether the apparent discontinuity between these two 'flourishing' periods is to be interpreted as merely an optical illusion because a number of relevant texts from the first half of the thirteenth century have been lost (or have escaped our attention), or as a pertinent fact of literary history. It is probable that certain writings from that period have not survived; but that of course applies to other periods as well. Or are there perhaps indications that the loss of texts was not accidental or random as we would normally expect? According to Julius Schwietering the paraphrase of the Cantic which the Cistercians

made a search for in their convents in the year 1200 with the intention of destroying it, may very well have been Landeric's commentary. And the reference in *Moriz von Craon* to a passage on Solomon in a work by Heinric von Veldeke is so puzzling, but at the same time so precise, that it is tempting to accept Schwietering's view²² that an unknown text by Veldeke could be meant, of which nothing has survived, precisely because it had altered the content of the Canticum in too courtly a fashion.

It would, anyway, seem prudent and even reasonable not to reject the possibility that a first wave of courtly approaches to mysticism, contemporary with the rise of courtly literature in France and in the Anglo-Norman world, was followed by a period of stagnation, regression or, perhaps, repression in the first half of the thirteenth century. The second wave, from around the middle of that century onwards, could then conceivably be paralleled with, and explained as an effect of, the later dissemination of courtly ideology in the Netherlands and in the Germanic world.

This two-phase scenario is (at first sight) vigorously corroborated by Gerard of Liège's writing *Quinque incitamenta ad Deum amandum ardentius*.²³ Indeed, this tract, which clearly demonstrates courtly elements in the way it represents religious love, still appears to have borrowed these elements mainly from Richard of St Victor and Gilbert of Hoyland – as far as Wilmart's investigation of the sources suggests, and setting aside the vernacular influences to be discussed in a moment.²⁴

Gerard's quotations from vernacular love-songs, on the other hand, seem to be indicative of a direct contact with contemporaneous, or at least more recent, courtly literature. And this in turn, as appears from P. Dronke's discussion of Gerard's work, could imply that such a contact must in fact have existed and expanded naturally since Richard's and Gilbert's times.²⁵ It has, to be sure, been clearly demonstrated by N. van den Boogaard²⁶ that the vernacular insertions in Gerard's treatise must to a large extent have emanated from a clerical or at least a religious environment, in which they had already received their 'divine' interpretation, but this merely strengthens the hypothesis of a 'natural development', as it confirms Dronke's view that the symbiosis of profane lyric poetry and mysticism must have been *anterior* to *Quinque incitamenta*.

Further evidence of this process is rare, but it does exist. Although the *Luve Ron*, attributed to Thomas of Hales and written shortly

before or after the middle of the thirteenth century,²⁷ does not explicitly refer to profane lyrics, it does in its way document the fact that by about 1250 the topic of religious love could be approached in a context of 'courtliness'. The poem, which was written at the request of a 'mayde cristes', celebrates the love of Christ as the only true love in contrast to worldly love, which is perishable and illusory:

Hwer is paris and heleyne
 pat weren so bryht and feyre on bleo.
 Amadas tristram and dideyne.
 yseude and alle þeo.

...
 Hit is of heom al so hit nere.
 of heom me haveþ wunder itold ...²⁸

(Where are Paris and Helen, who were so beautiful and fair of appearance, Amadas, Tristram and Idoine, Isolde and all those... It is as if they had never been. Remarkable things have been told about them)

It has, to my knowledge, not yet been examined in detail, but I would not be greatly surprised if even such a solemn religious genre as the hymnic literature of the period demonstrated the phenomenon. The way in which, for instance, the hymn *Summi regis cor*²⁹ represents the loving soul suggests affinities at least with the courtly sensitivity in matters of love.

In comparison with these relatively rare and not entirely certain indications of the first half or the middle of the century, it is evident, however, that this 'courtly' current of mystic literature reached its height only in the second half of the thirteenth century. The non-lyrical, 'epic' or 'didactic' mystic texts concerned are reasonably well known to students of medieval spirituality. They comprise such different genres as saints' lives (e.g. the romance-like biography in Dutch of St Lutgart, or at least its prologue, which explicitly contrasts religious *Minne* with courtly *Minne*³⁰), allegorical poems like *Quant li mundain sont endormi*,³¹ didactic texts in the *helinand*-stanza (aab aab bba bba, as in the three poems published by Bechmann³²), a mystic 'love-rule' like the *Regle des fins amans*,³³ or the peculiar, heterogeneous forms of writing, typical perhaps of the women mystics of the period, which were practised by Mechthild of Magdeburg³⁴ and Marguerite Porete.³⁵

However interesting it would be to compare or contrast these writings with Hadewijch's – this comparative work has to some

extent already been done³⁶ – I prefer to concentrate here on those analogies which are relevant in a more specifically formal respect. Even so, the reader will, I hope, understand that I can offer nothing more than a tentative and inevitably defective inventory of the thirteenth-century mystic love-song.

The religious songs and motets from which Gerard of Liège drew his vernacular quotations are, as far as the chronology is concerned, the first texts to be considered. Although such poems are known only by manuscripts from the first half of the fourteenth century onwards,³⁷ it is evident – if only by the witness of the *Quinque incitamenta* – that the genre must go back to (the middle of) the thirteenth century.

Similar to the insertions in the *Quinque incitamenta* are the nineteen refrains (with musical notation in one of the manuscripts) in the anonymous *Court de paradis*, written in Ile-de-France or Picardy in the second half of the century.³⁸ This poem describes in 643 lines, mostly rhyming couplets, a courtly festivity in heaven, to which God, appropriately on All Saints' Day, has invited his angels and saints. The gathering is, not unusually in a depiction of heavenly mirth, enlivened by the singing and dancing of the participants. These revellers do not consider it beneath their dignity to make use of worldly refrains, particularly from courtly love-songs, to give voice to their joy:

Si chantent tuit communalment
De fine amor qui les mestroie
Et chascun chantait endroit soi:
Touz li cuers me rit de joie
*Quant Dieu voi.*³⁹

(So they all sing together of the *fine amor* which rules them, and each sang for himself: *my whole heart laughs with joy when I see God.*)

Here again the boundaries between the profane and the religious domains are not clear, and neither is the time at which the change-over took place: the refrains 'Renvoisement i vois / a mon ami' (Joyfully I run to my beloved; 335–6) and 'Ensi doit dame aler / A son ami' (So must a lady go to her beloved; 359–60), which sound worldly enough, seem to me to have been adapted to a religious sense at an earlier stage, judging from the context in at least one of the other manuscripts in which they occur.⁴⁰

The Old French rhymed paraphrase of the Song of Songs in MS

Paris, B.N. f. fr. 14,966, in which the anonymous author has 'sa et la une chanso mise' to brighten up his commentary, is of a more eastern origin, though still from the north of France. As T. Hunt has shown, at least one of its *chansos* was directly inspired by the lyric *Qui bien vuet amors descriure* by Robert de Reims.⁴¹ In this work the apologetic element is apparent: as the preface indicates, the poet's purpose was to compose

rime nouvelle. . .
 plaisans asses et plus belle
 Et plus vraie bien dire lose
 Et plus honeste que nest celle
 Dou roumant con dist la rose.⁴²

(a new poem. . ., pleasant enough and more beautiful, and more true, I dare say, and more honourable than the one of the romance which they call *The Rose*.)

Comparable still, chronologically speaking, with the poems quoted by Gerard of Liège are at least some of the songs mentioned by P. Bec in his 1977 paper on religious paraphrases of profane lyrics in medieval French literature.⁴³ It may be true, as Bec himself points out, that many of these paraphrases show the influence not only of aristocratic, but also of 'popular' literature (but how 'popular' was the *chanson de femme* in the thirteenth century anyway?); however, in such songs as 'An paradis bel ami ai' (I have a fine friend in paradise),⁴⁴ 'Hé! cuer joli, trop m'avés laissié en douleur' (Alas! gentle heart, you left me too much in pain)⁴⁵ and 'Et que me demandez vous, amis mignos?' (And what do you want of me, gentle friend?)⁴⁶ the courtly element is very evident.

The manuscript in which the first of those songs occurs – the same Metz manuscript in which also the allegory *Quant li mundain sont endormi* can be found – contains at least four more religious lyrics of the genre considered here: the songs 'Grans est li cuers plains d'amoureux delis' (Brimful is the heart with amorous joy),⁴⁷ 'A! Diex, qui servir nepourquant' (O, God, whom to serve nonetheless),⁴⁸ 'Quant li noviaus tens repaire' (When the new season returns)⁴⁹ and 'Amours me font en sospirant chanter' (Love makes me sing while sighing).⁵⁰ Furthermore, it appears that one of these songs ('Quant li noviaus tens repaire') and Hilka's allegorical poem *Quant li mundain sont endormi*, both considered to be typical expressions of a 'beguine mysticism' flourishing in north-eastern France

(Metz) in the second half of the thirteenth century, were also to be found⁵¹ in a collection of religious poems written in Walloon country, probably in or near Liège, around 1311.⁵² Which, half a century or more after *Quinque incitamenta*, would again confirm that at least the French-speaking part of present-day Belgium (of which a small, but culturally important area belonged to the duchy of Brabant) had its share in the development of this literary fashion.

It is time now to come back to the question of the historical backgrounds of this 'courtly mystic poetry'. In connection with Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of the Simple Souls* K. Ruh has put forward the hypothesis that the courtly element in Marguerite's writings may have found its origin in a troubadour-inspired language which had come into use among the beguines of northern France, and that this in turn could be explained by the fact that many of the beguines belonged to the nobility.⁵³

Obvious though it may be that a number of the texts just mentioned are in some way linked with the early beguine movement, the sociological part of Ruh's explanation could still give cause for scepticism. We are, as a matter of fact, poorly informed about the social classes from which thirteenth-century beguines were recruited. But would it not be surprising, to say the least, if the aristocratic element of the beguines had been more important than in the institutionalized religious communities?

I would therefore suggest supplementing Ruh's status-sociological explanation with a psycho-sociological element. It is a well-known fact that the early beguines or *mulieres religiosae*, as modern historiography more accurately calls them, did not live in the 'closed' beguinages which we know from later times, but tried to lead a spiritual life while staying, at least to some degree, 'in the world'. Certain texts accompanying the documents mentioned earlier as witnesses of 'courtly mysticism', for instance in the Metz manuscript, refer explicitly to this kind of situation when indicating the audience they have in mind:

Fille, je resgarde que mout de gent vouroient estre en religion et ne puent, ou par povretei ou par ce qu'il sont retenu par le loien de mariage, ou par autre raison; ce te fas un livre de la religion dou cuer de l'abaie dou Saint Esperit, que tu et tuit cil qui ne puent estre en religion corporeil soient en la religion espirituel.⁵⁴

(Daughter, I observe that many people would like to be in religion and cannot, whether by poverty or because they are bound by the ties of

matrimony, or otherwise; therefore I have made you a book on the religion of the heart of the convent of the Holy Ghost, so that you and all those who cannot be in religion physically, can be in religion spiritually.)

The fact that these 'religious women' were still 'in the world' while trying to lead a spiritual life must, I believe, have been the decisive factor in the development of the cultural and literary phenomenon discussed here. Their situation will logically have given birth to a religious literature which was deliberately apologetical and competed with worldly culture. Furthermore, and even more relevant perhaps, that situation was strikingly analogous, psychologically speaking, to the position of the courtly loving mistress, whose love was much more a personal secret and a matter of the heart than a socially accepted or positively sanctioned condition. Whereas the *brides* of Christ resided in the convents, these women were, or at least felt themselves to be, the *mistresses* of God.

In spite of all the criticism recently directed by U. Peters⁵⁵ against the very concept of a 'beguine spirituality' outside (and even inside) France, I still believe that the early or pre-beguine movement is the most plausible context in which to try and understand Hadewijch and her 'courtly' conception of love. She was not the only one of her time, and she probably was not the first either, to have adapted the vocabulary and the poetic form of the courtly song to a mystic content. In order to appraise her significance and her real place in literary history we must not satisfy ourselves with comparing her poems with *troubadour* or *trouvère* poetry and then deciding that she certainly 'borrowed' a great deal. We should also take into account that the language of courtly mystic poetry, which she seemingly initiated, in fact already existed or was coming into existence in her cultural milieu (beguine or otherwise) and that she could make use of it quite naturally, not necessarily manifesting herself as an imitator of the worldly poets, but on the contrary stepping forward as a representative of a certain conception of 'divine love' and as a member of the spiritual 'community' which was founded on it.⁵⁶

NOTES

- 1 On this set of images and their interpretation as being indicative of 'noble origin', see T. M. Guest, *Some Aspects of Hadewijch's Poetic Form in the 'Strofische Gedichten'* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 167ff.
- 2 *Hadewijch. The Complete Works*, trans. C. Hart (London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 190-1.
- 3 Guest, *Aspects of Hadewijch*, p. 167.

- 4 *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 183, 571 C; *S. Bernardi Opera* vi,1, ed. J. Lecercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Ed. Cistercienses, 1970), p. 128. See also *Sermones in Cantica* xxi,6 and xxiv,6 (PL 183, 875 and 897; *S. Bernardi Opera* i (Rome: Ed. Cistercienses, 1957), pp. 125, 157-8). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- 5 A view which it is not at all easy to demonstrate in the facts, as has been rightly observed by U. Köpf, 'Bernhard von Clairvaux in der Frauenmystik', in P. Dinzelbacher and D. R. Bauer, eds., *Frauenmystik im Mittelalter* (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 1985), pp. 48-77; here p. 50.
- 6 N. de Paep, *Hadewijch, Strofische gedichten. Een studie van de minne in het kader der 12e en 13e eeuwse mystiek en profane minnemystiek* (Ghent: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, 1967), pp. 258ff.
- 7 T. M. Guest, 'Hadewijch and Minne', in P. K. King and P. F. Vincent, eds., *European Context. Studies in the History and Literature of the Netherlands presented to Th. Weevers* (Cambridge: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1971), pp. 26-7; see also her *Aspects of Hadewijch*, pp. 3ff.
- 8 Guest, *Aspects of Hadewijch*, p. 13; on analogous lines: M. H. van der Zeyde, *Hadewijch. Een studie over de mens en de schrijfster* (Groningen, Den Haag and Batavia: Wolters, 1934), pp. 19ff.
- 9 J. Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch* (Tielt and Bussum: Cannoo, 1981), pp. 333ff.
- 10 F. Willaert, *De poëtica van Hadewijch in de Strofische Gedichten* (Utrecht: HES, 1984), p. 359.
- 11 For instance, *De diligendo Deo*, c. viii (23), PL 182, 987-8.
- 12 For instance in Sermo x, 1ff; although the motif of maternity is not absent from Hadewijch's writings, it is fundamentally different there, as it is not logically attached to the erotic theme.
- 13 Although the aspect of 'longing' is at least as prominent in William of St-Thierry's as in Bernard's writings (see, e.g., K. Ruh, 'Amor deficiens und amor desiderii in der Hoheliedauslegung Wilhelms von St.-Thierry', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 64 (1990), 70-88), here too the background is clearly christological, the psychology bridal, not erotic.
- 14 Oxford University Press, 1979. A more balanced appraisal of Bernard of Clairvaux than Gilson's negative one in his *La Théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Vrin, 1934), can also be found in Julia Kristeva's 'Ego affectus est. Saint Bernard: l'affect, le désir, l'amour', in *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), pp. 149-66 (with a recognizable allusion to Gilson on p. 151). See also J. Leclercq, *Nouveau visage de Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976), ch. 6.
- 15 Gilson, *La Théologie mystique*, p. 202.
- 16 *Hadewijch*, trans. C. Hart, pp. 184-5.
- 17 T. Hunt, 'The Song of Songs and Courtly Literature', in G. S. Burgess, ed., *Court and Poet* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981), p. 193.
- 18 G. Dumeige, *Ives, Épître à Séverin sur la charité. Richard de Saint-Victor, Les quatre degrés de la violente charité* (Paris: Vrin, 1955), pp. 127ff. (PL 196, 1207-24).

- 19 Until recently also attributed to Richard, but written, as it would appear from the manuscript tradition, by a (further unidentified) *frater Yvo*; cf. G. Dumeige, *Ives. Épître à Séverin*, pp. 20–5.
- 20 *Sermones in Canticum Salomonis*, PL 184, 11–252.
- 21 To my knowledge still unedited. Ample discussion and numerous quotations will be found in L. Pollmann, 'Der Tractatus De Amore des Andreas Capellanus und seine Stellung in der Geschichte der Amorthetheorie' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Freiburg i.Br., 1955), pp. 207–35; F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1958), pp. 280–302; N. de Paepe, *Hadewijch, Strofische Gedichten*, pp. 3–17.
- 22 See Julius Schwietering, *Der 'Tristan' Gottfrieds von Straßburg und die Bernhardische Mystik* (Berlin: Abhandlungen der Preußischen Akademie von Wissenschaften, 1943). For the predominant opinion among Germanic scholars, namely that the text in question must be identified as the *Eneid*, see H.-J. Ziegeler, 'Moriz von Craûn', in K. Ruh *et al.*, eds., *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978–), vol. VI, pp. 692–700; esp. p. 694.
- 23 The attribution is uncertain, but the dating in the thirteenth century, the only really important element for our purpose here, seems to be quite secure. For a survey of the problems, see G. Hendrix, 'Onderzoek naar het oeuvre van "Gerardus Leodiensis"', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 58 (1984), 281–99 (second part).
- 24 A. Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia. Extraits des manuscrits latins de la reine Christine conservés au Vatican* (Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933), pp. 181–247.
- 25 For a further development of the question I refer to P. Dronke's commentary on Gerard's work; see P. Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-lyric*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 59–62.
- 26 N. van den Boogaard, 'Les insertions en français dans un traité de Gérard de Liège', in *Marche romane. Mélanges de philologie et de littératures romanes offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem* (Liège: Cahiers de l'ARULg, 1978), pp. 679–97.
- 27 A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1949), p. 233; B. Hill, 'The "Luue-ron" and Thomas de Hales', *Modern Language Review* 59 (1964), 321–30.
- 28 *An Old English Miscellany*, ed. R. Morris. Early English Text Society, OS 49 (London, 1872; repr. New York: Kraus, 1969), pp. 93–9.
- 29 Attributed by some to Hermann Josef (died after 7 November 1225), by others to Arnulf of Louvain (abbot of Villers in Brabant, 1240–8). See F. J. Worstbrock in K. Ruh *et al.*, eds., *Verfasserlexikon*, vol. III, 1062–6 (lit.), and vol. I, 500–2 (lit.).
- 30 M. Gysseling, *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten*, vol. II, 5 (*Sente Lutgart*) (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1985).
- 31 A. Hilka, 'Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 47 (1927), 121–70, esp. 132ff.

- 32 'Drei Dits de l'ame aus der Handschrift Ms. Gall. Oct. 28 der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 13 (1889), 35-84.
- 33 Published by K. Christ, 'La Regle des fins amans. Eine Beginnenregel aus dem Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts', in B. Schädel and W. Mulertt, eds., *Philologische Studien aus dem romanisch-germanischen Kulturkreise. Karl Voretzsch zum 60. Geburtstage* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1927), pp. 173-213.
- 34 P. Gall Morel, *Offenbarungen der Schwester Mechthild von Magdeburg oder Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (Regensburg, 1869; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963).
- 35 Romana Guarnieri, *Il movimento del Libero Spirito*. Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà, 4 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1965), pp. 352-708.
- 36 As far as Mechthild and Marguerite are concerned especially by K. Ruh: "'Le miroir des simples âmes" der Marguerite Porete', in H. Fromm, W. Harms and U. Ruberg, eds., *Verbum et Signum* (Munich: Fink, 1975), vol. II, pp. 365-87, and 'Beginnenmystik. Hadewijch, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 106 (1977), 265-77 (both articles reprinted in K. Ruh, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. II, ed. V. Mertens (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1984)), and 'Gottesliebe bei Hadewijch, Mechthild von Magdeburg und Marguerite Porete', in Angel San Miguel, Richard Schwaderer and Manfred Tietz, eds., *Romanische Literaturbeziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Franz Rauhut* (Tübingen: Narr, 1985), pp. 243-54.
- 37 In collections of pious songs such as Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale f. lat. 15,139, f. fr. 12,483 or f. fr. 24,406.
- 38 E. Vilamo-Pentti, *La Court de paradis. Poème anonyme du XIII^e siècle* (Helsinki: Société Littéraire Finnoise, 1953).
- 39 Vilamo-Pentti, *La Court de paradis*, p. 102; the refrain (in italics, with *la* substituted for *Dieu* in the second line) is to be found in several worldly rondeaux and motets: see N. van den Boogaard, *Rondeaux et refrains. Du XII^e siècle au début du XIV^e* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969), p. 251, no. 1781.
- 40 G. Raynaud, *Recueil de motets français des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles*, vol. II (Paris, 1883; repr. Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms, 1972), p. 59, no. xxxvi.
- 41 See T. Hunt, 'The Song of Songs and courtly literature', pp. 189-96. The courtly imagery and the concept of love in Robert's song in fact bear such resemblance to Hadewijch's poetry that it is tempting to consider the possibility of direct borrowing in her case as well; see G. J. Peeters, 'Traditionele stijl van de minnelijck', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 47 (1973), 291-322.
- 42 B.N. f. fr. 14,966, f. IV.
- 43 P. Bec, 'Lyrique profane et paraphrase pieuse dans la poésie médiévale (XII^e-XIII^e s.)', in H. R. Runte, H. Niedzielski and W. L. Hendrickson,

- eds., *Jean Misrahi Memorial Volume. Studies in Medieval Literature* (Columbia: French Literature Publications, 1977), pp. 229–46.
- 44 From the manuscript Metz, Bibl. Munic. 535, fourteenth century (now destroyed); ed. P. Bec, 'Lyrique profane', pp. 233–4; A. Långfors, 'Notice des manuscrits 535 de la Bibliothèque Municipale de Metz et 10047 des Nouvelles Acquisitions du fonds français de la Bibliothèque Nationale', *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres bibliothèques* 42 (1933), 139ff., esp. 154–5.
 - 45 From the *Chansonnier de Montpellier* (Bibliothèque de la faculté de médecine H. 196), thirteenth century; ed. P. Bec, 'Lyrique profane', p. 234; G. Raynaud, *Recueil de motets français des XIII^e et XIII^e siècles*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1881; repr. Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms, 1972), pp. 280–1. Bec rightly, it seems to me, has reservations about the religious nature of this poem.
 - 46 Again from the manuscript Paris, B.N., f. fr. 12,483; ed. P. Bec, 'Lyrique profane', p. 238; A. Jeanroy, *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au moyen âge*, vol. iv (Paris: Champion, 1965), pp. 485–6.
 - 47 A. Långfors, 'Notice des manuscrits', pp. 147–9.
 - 48 Ibid., pp. 149–53.
 - 49 Ibid., pp. 156–8.
 - 50 Ibid., pp. 158–9.
 - 51 That is, before the manuscript was destroyed.
 - 52 Louvain, University Library, G 53. See A. Bayot, *Le Poème moral* (Liège: H. Vaillant Carmanne, 1929), pp. xvi–xxi.
 - 53 K. Ruh, "'Le miroir des simples âmes" der Marguerite Porete', p. 374. See also his 'Beginnenmystik', p. 272.
 - 54 P. Meyer, 'Notice du ms. 535 de la bibliothèque municipale de Metz', *Bulletin de la Société des Anciens Textes Français* 12 (1886), 41–76, here p. 49.
 - 55 U. Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), pp. 41–100.
 - 56 I cannot conclude this article without expressing my gratitude to Dr Jan Verdonck (State University of Ghent, Department of English Language), who was so kind as to revise my English.

CHAPTER 13

The Modern Devotion and innovation in Middle Dutch literature

Th. Mertens

Literary scholars do not show a great interest in Middle Dutch religious literature. This situation is remarkable, especially if one realizes that religious literature constitutes by far the majority of the extant Middle Dutch texts. Seventy to eighty per cent of the manuscript production in the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages concerned religious prose.¹ This percentage is high in comparison with that in other countries, and this is mainly due to the Modern Devotion.² In the late fourteenth, but particularly in the fifteenth century this innovatory religious movement produced a flow of religious literature in the vernacular. As regards the attention paid to this literature Dutch literary criticism compares poorly with that of neighbouring countries like England and Germany. How can this be explained?

From the Romantic period onwards traditional literary scholarship has made a distinction between form and content. In this view it was the artistic form which elevated a certain content above its temporal constraints to art. As a masterpiece of language it thus belonged to literary art, to literature. The content was considered of secondary concern, but should at any rate not eclipse the beauty of the form and by no means distract. This, it was thought, did happen in the case of religious literature, where content was supposed to be more important than form. This idea is understandable because religious literature has to a large extent been written in prose – and modest prose was respected less than anything in verse. Verse derived at least part of its splendour from nineteenth-century poetry, which was seen as an individual expression of an individual emotion. In religious literature the message was considered to prevail over the content. Moreover, the form of this literature was on the whole regarded as not very artistic. This view of literature excluded virtually all religious literature during the short period

(c. 1850–1900) in which the foundation was laid for the modern literary canon.³

Religious literature has even now not really recovered from this first blow, although later on a few genres were included in the literary canon, such as narrative texts like legends and exempla. It must be concluded that it is still content which sets the attitude towards religious literature, both in a negative *and*, indeed, in a positive sense. This attitude is determined largely ideologically. At one end of the range of different attitudes we see disgust and aversion because of non-Roman Catholic or atheistic convictions. Similarly an aversion of an ideological nature affects didactic and moralistic and of course also scatological and erotic literature.⁴ Furthermore we find lack of interest, which may be observed with nineteenth-century Roman Catholics. They held aloof from medieval religious literature by reason of the implicit notion that for Roman Catholics there was hardly a break between the Middle Ages and the Modern Period. It was assumed that there was little or no difference between medieval religious literature and contemporary ascetic literature. A historical interest was lacking where no historical development was postulated.⁵ Until recently there was in fact a general lack of interest in utilitarian literature, because its immediate function is no longer relevant.

However, at the other end of the range lies the interest in religious literature. This is often an ideological interest as well, concentrating mainly on content. In the early twentieth century there is sudden interest in Middle Dutch mystical literature. The reason for this was that official theology took a more favourable attitude towards spirituality and mysticism.⁶ The studies resulting from this were aimed at deriving theological insights from mystical texts. This cognitive-theological interest went hand in hand with the Flemish nationalism which flourished after World War I and consequently had quite strong ideological features. In this way the great mystics of the Low Countries took their place in Dutch literary history after all, but little specifically literary or literary-historical research in this area has been done so far. Not only in the past, but even now interest in religious literature is determined mainly ideologically. A Middle Dutch author like Jan van Ruusbroec nowadays receives a very wide dissemination with translations into (American) English, German and French, while translations into Catalan, Japanese, Finnish and Hungarian are in press or in preparation. This is due to

a religiously motivated interest in his teachings rather than to a literary one. Ideological interest in Middle Dutch literature need not necessarily be of a religious nature: witness the recent feminist interest in authors like Hadewijch (c. 1250), Beatrijs van Nazareth (d. 1268) and Alijt Bake (d. 1455).⁷

More than in other countries research into religious literature in the Low Countries seems to have been ideologically defined. This resulted in a fragmentation of this literature over a number of disciplines which rarely overlapped and indeed left a large part of their territory unexplored, in particular the enormous amount of non-mystical prose. Miracle stories, such as *Beatrijs* and *Marieken van Nieumeghen*, as well as verse saints' lives and mystery plays were considered to belong to literary history.⁸ On the other hand, theology was interested in Middle Dutch mystical texts. As a rule this approach was of a cognitive-theological nature and restricted mainly to doctrinal aspects of mystical literature. Moreover, in the nineteenth century historical interest was ideologically committed to Protestantism, which was primarily interested in late medieval spirituality, considered to be the precursor of the Reformation.⁹

Around the turn of the century it dissolved into an ideologically neutral interest. This might have been directed by the history of spirituality, but in the Low Countries this discipline was restricted to church history for an unusually long time.¹⁰ It is only fairly recently that the history of ideas has shown an occasional concern with religious prose that is counted neither as mystical nor as literature.¹¹

The modern study of literature has, over recent decades, exchanged its aestheticizing approach for a more historically motivated interest in early literature. However, owing to its content religious literature still encounters resistance of an ideological nature in the Low Countries. Therefore an explicit plea is necessary for the inclusion of the entire corpus of religious texts in literary-historical research.¹²

Beside this ideological resistance there is something else impeding a complete acceptance of religious literature as object of literary research: its massive quantity, which appears to be more extensive and more prominent than in, for instance, Middle High and Low German, Middle English or Middle French.¹³ The Modern Devotion was responsible not only for an enormous amount of anonymous texts of this type, but also for a wide variety in the tradition of each text. Modern literary criticism is not suitably prepared to tackle

such issues, because the usual approach, by text or by author, does not quite work here. Textual variation is difficult to handle. Traditional literary criticism is heavily focussed on the individual authors and their *œuvre* or separate works. In the process these take on the dimensions of literary monuments with an almost metaphysical artistic value which cannot be assessed in terms of time and history.¹⁴ As has already been said, this value is considered to be primarily in the form. To these literary critics it is annoying that each work should be found in so many different forms in the different manuscripts, something that in their view calls for reconstruction of the original text. But the manuscript tradition of religious literature deviates in a number of ways from what one is used to in the canon of Middle Dutch literature. One might even say that there is a literary and a non-literary or pragmatic type of textual tradition. With the former type the text, in the form it has been given, plays a central part. With the non-literary, pragmatic type the text is continually adjusted to the function it must fulfil.¹⁵ Textual variation is more aberrant in religious literature than elsewhere. This is certainly true for religious prose, which moreover lacks rhyme as a preserving factor. Still, textual variation is not equally great in every case. The tradition may vary considerably from text to text. Translations of the Bible, for instance, are much more consistent than texts for meditation, which *do* show a great deal of variation. A closer look makes it clear how these meditational texts came into being and what their position was in the religious life of their readers. As it appears, their genesis and function are not at all what one would normally imagine of literary texts.

The meditational texts of the Modern Devotion are usually handed down in manuscripts of the same small format as books of prayer. These manuscripts and the texts they contain are intended for private use. The choice of texts, and the selection of passages taken from these, depend on the personal taste of the compiler. The word 'taste' is aptly used here, but not without its dangers as it calls forth connotations with changeable, fashionable predilections. What is meant here is a selection of texts from sources which best feed the spirituality of the individual involved, which add enough relish for him (or her) to ponder them for a long time. After prolonged rumination they eventually yield up their secrets in a fully assimilated *sapida sapientia*. This 'tasty wisdom' stands in contrast with the superficial book learning of scholastic theology. The

selection of the excerpted passages thus represents individual taste in a very significant sense. It can be radically adjusted to such a taste as the compiler, copyist and reader are one and the same person: they copied the texts in their own cells for their own, private use. This attitude to reading, which finds expression in highly diverse collections of excerpts, is the cause of the excerpted texts surviving in fragments only, and gives rise to an extremely complex manuscript tradition. Methodologically speaking, one might even question whether the highly varying excerpts represent one and the same text.¹⁶ Situations of this kind are so emphatically and generally present in the case of religious literature that they enforce an extension of literary history, especially as regards the concept as such and its methods.¹⁷

In this way the literary-historical study of Middle Dutch religious literature leads, as it were, automatically to the problem of the tradition of abundant and highly diverse texts. But it also calls attention to the poetics of the genres.

A traditional approach to these works, which sometimes seem to be *ten a penny*, is not possible. This diverse and voluminous corpus cannot be dealt with by author, by text or by manuscript. The literary histories would be riddled with information so abundant that it would obfuscate rather than enlighten. A discussion by genre, however, is perfectly possible. On the basis of parallels of form, content, structure and function relationships between texts can be identified and a number of genres established. These genres can be considered one by one, individual authors, texts or manuscripts being mentioned by way of example.¹⁸ The development of the various genres and their interrelationship could also come in here.¹⁹ In this way a better insight may be gained into the whole corpus of surviving texts and the ways in which they functioned than with a discussion which tables one text after another. Such an approach would come close to a poetological survey (i.e. a survey of the conditions of creation, existence and tradition of literature).²⁰ A survey like this would greatly enrich the study of Middle Dutch literature, for which it is still lacking.

What in effect would this entail? By and large Middle Dutch religious literature can be divided into two major periods, with the division around 1360. Before that there is the period of the great Middle Dutch mystical authors, such as Hadewijch and Beatrijs van Nazareth (mentioned above) and Jan van Ruusbroec (d. 1381). In

this period we also find translations of the Bible, like Jacob van Maerlant's *Scolastica* (1271),²¹ harmonies of the gospels and translations of other parts of the New Testament (from the second half of the thirteenth century). Mystical works, too, are translated then into Middle Dutch. Beside this it is also the hey-day of religious romance, verse legends and saints' lives, like Hendrik van Veldeke's *Legend of St Servaes* (c. 1170) and *St Brendan's Voyage* (early thirteenth century) and the *Life of St Lutgart* (between 1248 and 1269), translated from the Latin *vita* by Thomas of Cantimpré. Finally, in the fourteenth century a tradition develops of a lay folk's catechism, often in verse and placed in the context of general moralistic-didactic works.

Between 1357 and 1388 the 'Bible Translator of 1360' is active. His identity has never been established, but it is supposed that he is a Carthusian from Herne (near Brussels). His translations comprise practically all the books of the Old Testament, the Acts of the Apostles and great works from the monastic tradition, like homilies and the *Dialogi* by Gregory the Great, the *Rule* of St. Benedict, the greater part of the *Vitae patrum* and Cassian's *Collationes*.²² This tremendous translation activity marks the beginning of the period of devotional prose, a period in which the Modern Devout will dominate. For this reason one might just as well take c. 1380 as the division of the two periods: Ruusbroec's death was in 1381 and the first public appearance of Geert Grote, founder of the Modern Devotion, was in 1379. The devotional prose of the Modern Devout clings to the traditional monastic literature and is addressed primarily to those leading a religious life.

The suggestion has been made above that religious literature should be studied from the perspective of the genres, in order to gain greater accessibility to this voluminous and seemingly disparate literature. In the following pages an attempt, by necessity tentative and incomplete, will be made to give shape and content to this idea. Special attention will be given to the Modern Devotion, the religious movement which in the latter period played such a dominant, though not all-encompassing, role.

The Modern Devotion was a movement of clerics and also of lay people who wanted to live an active religious life. For this they reached back, across a more recent period of spiritual decline, to the *devotio* of the apostles and the desert fathers. Suso found a willing ear with them for his complaint that the old devotion was dying out.²³

When, some fifty years after its inception, the movement began to write its own history, it chose the revival of that old devotion as its characteristic feature, and described itself as the *Devotio Moderna*. This Modern Devotion tried to affiliate with the old devotion by imitation. The old ways of living were put into practice again in order to resuscitate the old spirit of devotion. They resumed, for instance, the old common life of the apostles and the first Christians as it is described in Acts 2:42-7 and 4:32-5. That is why they are called Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life. This early Christian common life had not been adopted by the non-Jewish Christians, to whom it was permitted to have private possessions, but it was resumed by the early desert fathers.²⁴ Therefore the Modern Devout tried to revive the early Christian life, especially as it had been practised by these desert fathers. In fact this meant that they tried to link up with the monastic life of the early Middle Ages. In the later Middle Ages it had remained intact in a few orders, in particular that of the Carthusians. For the practical realization of their revival the Modern Devout owe a great deal to the lifestyle of the latter. Since the time of their foundation in 1084 the Carthusians had never had to be reformed because they had never been 'deformed', in accordance with their motto *nunquam reformata, quia nunquam deformata*. It is important, though, that the Modern Devout did not want to adopt the monastic life. Like the apostles they wanted to lead this common life on the basis of free will and love, not on that of public religious vows with their legally binding character. But beside this they acknowledged that there were those who had a calling to a real monastic life. They therefore soon founded a monastery of their own, with which they could avoid the habitual abuses of monastic life. Thus in 1387 the monastery of canons regular was founded at Windesheim (near Zwolle in the north-east Netherlands). In a very short time the sizeable Chapter of Windesheim grew from this.²⁵

In the imitation and re-practising of the early Christian ways of life texts played an important part.²⁶ Knowledge of those days was mainly comprehended through the old monastic literature, which was brought to a new bloom by this renewed interest. Three different aspects can be distinguished here. In the first place the old texts were copied for use in the convent itself and for spiritually related communities.²⁷ As a result the Modern Devout had at their disposal relatively extensive libraries. In the second place they translated

many texts of the monastic tradition in order to make them available to the sisters and lay brothers, who did not know Latin. In the third place they tried to comply with the contents of the texts in actual practice. In close connection with this they started to write new works in the old tradition and to create new genres which had not existed before.

The latter phenomenon in particular brought about a new development in both Middle Dutch literature and the Medieval Latin religious literature written in the Low Countries, which in this respect show a remarkable homogeneity. Early Christian genres were taken up again and new works were written after old models. When we look at it from the perspective of Middle Dutch literary history we see that in this way new genres are introduced into the vernacular. These do not spring from a linear, internal literary development; on the contrary, across a period and a language boundary they hark back to an older, Latin literature.²⁸ Even more interesting from the viewpoint of literary history is the process of the re-practising and observing of the contents of the old literature. This imitation of ways of life drawn from these Latin sources led to a new lifestyle which in its turn called forth literary genres which had not yet existed. For instance, the re-practising of the religious conversation, as it was known from the *Collationes patrum* of Joannes Cassianus (d. 435), led to frequent 'collating', as it was called. This is reflected in written-out 'collations', which can be considered as new works in the old tradition of this genre. But the practice of collation also resulted in a new genre, that of the *collationalia* ('collation books').²⁹ These books contain the thematically ordered texts of different authors. When the Modern Devout began a religious conversation, that is, a collation, a passage from such a collation book could be read by way of introduction to the topic of conversation and to set the discussion going. Thus a new genre is created based on an experience from actual life, which itself has sprung from an old genre.³⁰

In this way an intensive interaction of literature and way of life comes into being. This does not consist in a once-only borrowing of a way of life, nor in the single birth of a new genre which from that time on will lead a literary life of its own. Literature and life continue to fertilize each other, as a result of which both keep developing. The rather closed milieu in which these developments take place works like a hothouse. New developments can spread fast

and, because all congregations act alike, quickly be given the status of custom. Derived ways of life and forms of literature can thus evolve very rapidly too. Scholars in the areas of literary history and the history of spirituality may find this quite confusing. Little and rather disparate material is available and scholars tend to consider this as belonging to one consistent whole. As a result there is a danger that the diachronic, developmental aspect will remain indistinct, all the more so because the high speed of the developments is not a stimulant to diachronic research: the events seem to occur almost simultaneously. This confusion is strengthened again by the distance between the actual event and its historiographical conservation in writing and, similarly, between the original historiographical text and the surviving manuscripts.

This last consideration can be clarified in the light of the spiritual testaments of the Modern Devout. In the lives of some of the sisters of the Modern Devotion the story occurs that on their deathbed they are asked by bystanders for a spiritual testament. The sister in question would answer them with an edifying 'point', for example that she had always taken pains to keep the peace with herself and with the others. When one tries to find out how these sisters arrived at this practice of the spiritual testament, there seems to be nothing in the Modern Devotion that is immediately connected with this. It is true that spiritual testaments are known, especially of authoritative devouts, such as priors of monasteries and rectors of fraternities, but on closer inspection it appears that they are part of an early Christian and Old Testament tradition of farewell discourses. Examples may be found in the Old Testament and in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, dating from the period 200 BC – 100 AD.³¹ The latter text was translated from Hebrew into Greek and then from Greek into Latin. From Latin it was finally translated into Middle Dutch in the first half of the fifteenth century. It is clear that a medieval historiographer may avail himself of this tradition to have his 'hero' deliver a farewell discourse to his followers on his deathbed. Owing to the strength of this tradition he is, by implication, depicted as a great figure who really should belong in the series of Old Testament patriarchs. This happens in the case of Jan Vos van Heusden (d. 1413), prior of Windesheim, under whose rule the Chapter of Windesheim saw an enormous expansion. Not long before his death he made a moving speech to his fellow brethren in the orchard of the convent. Johannes Busch, his biographer,

included an 'improved version', as he says himself, in his *Liber de viris illustribus* (1456-64). In this he has Jan Vos himself describe his address as a testament of unity, love and peace. It is not known whether Jan Vos really characterized his words in this way. There is every chance that the words came from the 'improving' hand of Busch, especially since elsewhere two more spiritual testaments are attributed to Jan Vos. Busch writes that also the great 'ancient fathers' (*patres primitivi*) of the Modern Devotion, Geert Grote (d. 1384) and Florens Radewijns (d. 1400), left behind a spiritual testament. Is this a literary fiction after the event, from the pen of the historiographer? Or had Grote and Radewijns really put the old literature into practice, and did historiographers like Johannes Busch simply describe this? Things are clearer in the case of Dirk van Grave (d. 1486), the later prior of Windesheim. About him it is known with certainty that he himself set a spiritual testament down in writing. For this he appealed to Jan Vos's will, passing over the fact that the language and the themes of this example were biblical rather than legal.³²

It becomes clear from all this that the Modern Devout, in the literary portraiture of their former leaders, liked to use this fiction of the spiritual testament, but also that there were priors who used, if not fostered, it in actual practice. The boundary between literature and the practice of life is not always easy to draw in hindsight, particularly because our knowledge is derived, again, from texts. The chronology of the spiritual testament as a literary genre and as a real-life practice cannot be traced either. Beside this there are also the spiritual testaments of the sisters, which once more are only known through the literature. This latter example shows that in the interaction between literature and life in this closed milieu of convents and congregations a divergent practice could develop in a very short time. Although such a practice (in this case that of the edifying 'point' made by a sister on her deathbed) may seem at first sight to have nothing to do with a literary genre as we know it, we cannot but conclude that in one way or another there has to be a connection.

Apart from the collation and the spiritual testament there are a few more early Christian genres which were resuscitated by the Modern Devout, such as the genre of the *vitae patrum*. This was to find its counterpart in the *vitae fratrum* and the *vitae sororum* of the Modern Devout.³³ Research into this should also account for the

fact that the titles of the biographical works of the Modern Devout do not usually allude to such a connection (e.g. the rather vague designation *Scriptum* of Rudolf Dier van Muiden or *De viris illustribus* of Johannes Busch).³⁴ On the other hand it may well be that Thomas à Kempis with his title *Dialogi noviciorum* is seeking to ally himself with Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*.³⁵ We should probably view in the same light the written collections of *dicta* of the important early Modern Devout. These may have been meant as imitations of the early Christian *Verba seniorum*, the instructive statements of the Desert Fathers, which are part of the early Christian *Vitae patrum* and which were held in high esteem by the Modern Devout.³⁶

In addition to all this there are genres which had not existed before and which sprang from the way of life of the Modern Devout. Beside the *collationalia* already mentioned, there is the example of the genre of the *rapiarium*. These are unstructured collections of notes for the benefit of one's personal religious life. They came into being as the written spin-off of private meditation. The novelty of this genre lies especially in its highly personal nature, which finds expression in a specific literary form, lay-out and material outward appearance.³⁷

The close relation between literature and life with the Modern Devout makes them a highly interesting subject for literary scholars. It poses questions that cannot well be solved in the traditional way. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the Modern Devout made a number of innovative contributions to literature by resuscitating old genres and particularly by creating new ones. Their unusually intensive contact with written texts will, in our days, in turn force literary historians to introduce innovations in the study of content and method. In this way the Modern Devout are, in a double sense, innovators in Middle Dutch literature.

TRANSLATED BY ERIK KOOPER

NOTES

- 1 Estimation of Kurt Ruh, 'Geistliche Prosa', in Willi Erzgräber, ed., *Europäisches Spätmittelalter*. Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft, 8 (Wiesbaden: Athenaion, 1978), pp. 565–605, esp. p. 565; see also Th. Mertens, 'Boeken voor de eeuwigheid: ter inleiding', in Th. Mertens et al., *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*. Nederlandse cultuur en literatuur in de Middeleeuwen VIII (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1993), pp. 8–35, esp. pp. 8–26.

- 2 The translation of the term used to indicate the followers of the movement of the *Devotio moderna*, Dutch 'de moderne devoten', is slightly problematic. Sometimes the descriptive translation 'the adherents of the Modern Devotion' is used, but this is unwieldy; 'the Modern Devotionalists' not much less so. For this essay the term 'the Modern Devout' has been adopted.
- 3 This timeless, aestheticizing view of art was recently expressed in the polemic between Theodoor Weevers and Frank Willaert about Tanis M. Guest's *Some Aspects of Hadewijch's Poetic Form in the 'Strofische Gedichten'* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975). Weevers sees this polemic as a 'conflict between medieval studies and modern literary criticism'; see *Spiegel der Letteren* 18 (1976), 42-5, and 19 (1977), 35-42.
- 4 Cf. Herman Pleij, *Nederlandse literatuur van de late middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: HES, 1990), pp. 10-12.
- 5 For this 'static-ideal' concept of history which the Roman Catholic Church held of its medieval past, see Adriaan H. Bredero, *Christenheid en christendom in de middeleeuwen. Over de verhouding van godsdienst, kerk en samenleving*, 2nd edn (Kampen: Kok Agora; Kapellen: DNB/Pelckmans, 1987), p. 275.
- 6 See Otger Steggink, 'Study in Spirituality in Retrospect: Shifts in Methodological Approach', *Studies in Spirituality* 1 (1991), 5-23, esp. 6-10.
- 7 For Hadewijch see the contribution by J. Reynaert in this volume. Beatrijs van Nazareth, a Cistercian nun, wrote a splendid, if brief, prose treatise on the seven ways in which spiritual love is experienced. Her life was written by her father confessor. Hadewijch and Beatrijs van Nazareth are the earliest (as far as we know) authors of Middle Dutch prose, which with them immediately attains a very high level. See G. J. Lewis, *Bibliographie zur deutschen Frauenmystik des Mittelalters* (with an appendix on Beatrijs van Nazareth and Hadewijch by F. Willaert and M.-J. Govers). *Bibliographien zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 10 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1989). Alijt Bake was, for a while, prioress of a nunnery of canonesses of the Modern Devotion. She, too, wrote prose, among which an autobiography. On her see, for example, Grietje Dresen, *Onschuldphantasieën. Offerzin en heilsverlangen in feminisme en mystiek* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1990). Recent studies of Middle Dutch mystical authors can be traced easily with the help of the extensive annual bibliography in the journal *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, as from issue 24 (1950).
- 8 Cf. Reinder P. Meijer, *Literature of the Low Countries. A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium*, 2nd edn (The Hague and Boston: Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 4-5, 9, 20-1, 56-62.
- 9 Cf. A. G. Weiler, 'Recent Historiography on the Modern Devotion: Some Debated Questions', *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland* 26 (1984), 161-79, esp. 177-8.
- 10 Cf. L. Milis, 'De devotionele praktijk in de laat-middeleeuwse Nederlanden', in J. D. Janssens, ed., *Hoofsheid en devotie in de middeleeuwse*

- maatschappij. *De Nederlanden van de 12e tot de 15e eeuw. Handelingen van het wetenschappelijk colloquium te Brussel, 21-24 oktober 1981* (Brussels: De Vrienden van de Kapellekerk, 1982), pp. 133-45. See also L. Reypens, 'De afbakening v[an] het terrein der geschiedenis v[an] de vroomheid tegenover de algemene kerkgeschiedenis', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 26 (1952), 213-14.
- 11 See, for example, Petronella Bange, *Spiegels der christenen. Zelfreflectie en ideaalbeeld in laat-middeleeuwse moralistisch-didactische traktaten*. Middel-eeuwse Studies, II (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, 1986, with a summary in German (318-22)). On pp. 245-52 she explicitly places her research in the context of the history of ideas.
 - 12 See Th. Mertens, 'De geestelijke literatuur tussen theologie en filologie', in F. P. van Oostrom *et al.*, *Misselike tonghe. De Middelnederlandse letterkunde in interdisciplinair verband*. Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen, V (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 130-41, 218-24. The boundaries and the possibilities of literary-sociological research of the Middle Dutch religious tracts are discussed by Geert Warnar in 'The "Ridderboec": Author and Audience of a Devotional Treatise', in *Les Sources littéraires et leurs publics dans l'espace bourguignon (XIVe-XVIe s.)*. *Rencontres de Middelbourg / Bergen-op-Zoom (27 au 30 septembre 1990)*. Publication du Centre Européen d'Études Bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe s.), 31 ((n. pl.), 1991), pp. 153-64, esp. pp. 153-5. Ludo Jongen makes a plea for the literary structure of saints' lives in his 'Middle Dutch Prose Hagiographies: Some remarks on the function of references to sources in *vitae* from the Northern Netherlands', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Älteren Germanistik* 34 (1991), 127-41, esp. 127-9.
 - 13 Cf. note 1 above.
 - 14 Literary criticism based solely on great authors and great literary works is sometimes called 'monument philology' (*Denkmäler-Philologie*); see Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters. Studien zu ihrer Überlieferungs-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte*. Texte und Textgeschichte, 20 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), p. 4.
About Platonizing, metaphysical aesthetics and the overrating of the written and printed traditions, leading to a naive equation of philological experience with the experience of the original audience of the text, see Hans Robert Jauss, 'Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature', section 8, in his *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti. *Theory and History of Literature*, 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 76-109, 205-11, esp. pp. 99-101.
 - 15 See Aleida Assmann, 'Schriftliche Folklore. Zur Entstehung und Funktion eines Überlieferungstyps', in Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann and Christoph Hardmeier, eds., *Schrift und Gedächtnis. Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: Fink, 1983), pp. 175-93. Assmann speaks of a literary and a folkloristic type of survival, concepts borrowed by me in the form of literary and non-literary types of survival. Cf. Th. Mertens, 'Niet-literaire literatuur', in W. P. Gerritsen,

- Annelies van Gijzen and Orlanda S. H. Lie, eds., *Een school spierinkjes. Kleine opstellen over Middelnederlandse artes-literatuur*. Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, xxvi (Hilversum: Verloren, 1991), pp. 120–2.
- 16 For the influence on religious prose of this attitude to reading and the view of literature connected with it, see Th. Mertens, 'Lezen met de pen. Ontwikkelingen in het laatmiddeleeuws geestelijk proza', in F. P. van Oostrom and Frank Willaert, eds., *De studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde: stand en toekomst* (Symposium Antwerpen 22–24 September 1988) (Hilversum: Verloren, 1989), pp. 187–200.
 - 17 Cf. Kurt Ruh, 'Überlieferungsgeschichte mittelalterlicher Texte als methodischer Ansatz zu einer erweiterten Konzeption von Literaturgeschichte', in H.-J. Stahl, ed., *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Prosaforschung. Texte und Textgeschichte*, 19 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), pp. 262–72.
 - 18 For example, for the Middle Dutch sermon as (written) genre, see G. C. Zielemans, *Middelnederlandse epistel- en evangeliepreken*. Kerkhistorische Bijdragen, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1978, with summaries in German and French); a survey is provided by the same author in his paper 'Das Studium der deutschen und niederländischen Predigten des Mittelalters', in Kurt Otto Seidel, ed., *So predigen eteliche. Beiträge zur deutschen und niederländischen Predigt im Mittelalter*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 378 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982), pp. 5–48. For the meditation tracts, see Mertens, 'Lezen met de pen', for the farewell discourse and the spiritual will: Th. Mertens, 'Geestelijke testamenten in de laatmiddeleeuwse Nederlanden. Een verkenning van het genre', in G. R. W. Dibbets and P. W. M. Wackers, eds., *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W. M. H. Hummelen* (Wijhe: Quarto, 1989), pp. 75–89. See also the papers of Geert Warnar (on catechetical treatises), Mikel M. Kors (on spiritual letters), G. C. Zielemans (on sermons), R. Th. M. van Dijk (on books of hours), J. B. Oosterman (on prayers and their meanings) and Ludo Jongen and Wybren Scheepers (on *libri sororum*) in Th. Mertens et al., *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid*.
 - 19 Methodological considerations concerning this are given by Jauss, 'Theory of Genres', esp. section 3, pp. 82–7, and section 11, pp. 107–9.
 - 20 See, for example, Max Wehrli, *Literatur im deutschen Mittelalter. Eine poetologische Einführung*. Reclam, Universal-Bibliothek, 8038 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987).
 - 21 This work, also known as the *Rijmbijbel*, is a metrical paraphrase of Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica*.
 - 22 Cf. Theo Coun, *De oudste Middelnederlandse vertaling van de Regula S. Benedicti*. With a General Introduction in English. *Regulae Benedicti Studia, Supplementa*, 8 (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1980), pp. 194–213.
 - 23 Cf. Pius Künzle, ed., *Heinrich Seuses Horologium Sapientiae*. Spicilegium Friburgense, 23 (Freiburg (Switzerland): Universitätsverlag, 1977), Lib. 1, Mat. v: pp. 404–16.
 - 24 See Hans Martin Klinkenberg, 'Die Devotio Moderna unter dem

- Thema "Antiqui-Moderni" betrachtet', in Albert Zimmermann, ed., *Antiqui und Moderni. Traditionsbewußtsein und Fortschrittsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*. Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 9 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1974), pp. 394-419; Elisabeth Gössmann, *Antiqui und Moderni im Mittelalter. Eine geschichtliche Standortbestimmung*. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes, Neue Folge, 23 (Munich: Schöningh, 1974), pp. 117-25.
- 25 The following recent surveys in English are useful: R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, III (Leiden: Brill, 1968), and Weiler, 'Recent Historiography', esp. pp. 170-3. There is also an anthology: *Devotio Moderna. Basic Writings*, trans. and intro. John Van Engen. The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988).
 - 26 For a general introduction to the bookish nature of the Modern Devotion, see Nikolaus Staubach, 'Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Bereich der Devotio moderna', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), 418-61.
 - 27 For the important contribution of the Modern Devout to fifteenth-century book production in the Low Countries, see P. J. Gumbert, *The Dutch and their Books in the Manuscript Age*. The Panizzi Lectures, 1989 (London: The British Library, 1990), esp. pp. 54-8.
 - 28 For the great influence of the literature of the Desert Fathers on the spirituality of the Modern Devotion, see Enrico Norelli, 'La littérature de Désert dans le renouveau catholique au début de l'époque moderne', *Irénikon* 51 (1978), 5-45 (English summary on p. 45).
 - 29 M. van Woerkum, 'Het Libellus "Omnes, inquit, artes," een rapiarium van Florentius Radewijns', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 25 (1951), 113-58, 225-68, esp. pp. 118-23; J. Deschamps, 'De Dietse collatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen, rector van het Zwolse fraterhuis', *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* (1987), 408-12; A. M. J. van Buuren, "'Wat materien gheliken op sonnendage ende hoechtijde te lesen.'" Het Middelnederlandse collatieboek van Dirc van Herxen', in Th. Mertens et al., *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid*. See also Th. Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex im Bereich der Devotio moderna', in Christel Meier-Staubach and Hagen Keller, eds., *Der Codex im Gebrauch* (papers of the international colloquium 'Der Codex im Gebrauch', Münster i.W., 11-13 June, 1992; forthcoming).
 - 30 It is important to distinguish the collation books (*collationalia*) from the manuscripts or books which merely preserve collations (i.e. conversations). The former are texts which are made available to the collations, like Florens Radewijns' *rapiarium* and the collation books of Dirc van Herxen. This is a new genre of texts, developed by the Modern Devout. Manuscripts preserving collations have existed since Cassian's *Collationes*; the Modern Devout creatively continue this line as well (for example the collations of Johannes Brinckerinck (d. 1419)).

- 31 For biblical farewell discourses, see, for example, Genesis 49–50 (Jacob), Deuteronomy 31–4 (Moses), Joshua 23–4 (Joshua), John 13–17 (Jesus), Acts 20:17–38 (Paul). For the Testaments, see H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. A Commentary*. *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha*, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1985).
- 32 See Mertens, 'Geestelijke testamenten'.
- 33 See John Van Engen, 'The Virtues, the Brothers, and the Schools: a Text from the Brothers of the Common Life', *Revue Bénédictine* 98 (1988), 178–217, esp. 183–4.
- 34 On this genre, see R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, 'Bibliography before Print: the Medieval *De viris illustribus*', in Peter Ganz, ed., *The Role of the Book in Medieval Culture*, vol. i. *Bibliologia*, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), pp. 133–53.
- 35 Klinkenberg, 'Die Devotio Moderna', p. 417, suggests this, pointing to a structural correspondence as well: in the *Dialogi noviciorum* the *vita* of the founder of the Modern Devotion, Geert Grote, is put in the second book, just as that of Benedictus is put in the *Dialogi*. For literary aspects of the early Christian biographies, see Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, vol. i: *Von der Passio Perpetuae zu den Dialogi Gregors des Großen*. *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters*, 8 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986).
- 36 On the early Christian *Apophthegmata*, see Berschin, *Biographie*, vol. i, pp. 128–33. The genre is also discussed in Christoffor Wagenaar, *Om met Christus te zijn. Het christelijk oosters monachisme* (Bonheiden: Abdij Bethlehem, 1990), pp. 77–86 (pp. 80–2: the characteristics of an authentic aphorism).
- 37 Cf. Th. Mertens, 'Rapiarium', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. xiii (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988), col. 114–19; Mertens, 'Lezen met de pen'.

PART VI

‘Artes’ texts

CHAPTER 14

A fourteenth-century vernacular poetics: Jan van Boendale's 'How Writers Should Write'

*W. P. Gerritsen, H. van Dijk, Orlanda S. H. Lie and
A. M. J. van Buuren*

The poet Jan van Boendale, secretary to the aldermen of the city of Antwerp, completed his *Der leken spieghel* (*The Laymen's Mirror*) in the year 1330.¹ In accordance with a well-known division of time into four periods – the past *sub lege*, the past *sub gratia*, the present and the future – the work consists of four books. The first gives a description of God and His Creation, the angels, the arrangement of the Cosmos and the nature of man; this is followed by a précis of sacred and secular history up to the Incarnation. Book ii takes the reader from the birth of the Virgin to present (i.e. medieval) times, with digressions on the main tenets of the Faith, a list of popes and emperors, the seven periods of History and the Assumption of the Holy Virgin. Treating of the present, the third book discusses the necessity of loving God, the cardinal virtues, and a number of moral precepts. From the eleventh chapter onwards, the emphasis is on the duties of the ruler. An admonition as to the importance of choosing the right people as counsellors leads up to a demonstration of the importance, especially in matters of statecraft, of literacy and scholarship. This in its turn is followed by the chapter which forms the topic of the present article: 'How Writers Should Write and What they Should Pay Attention To'. The third book is completed by chapters on fidelity, the four estates, five forms of love, and other moral questions. The fourth book places human existence in the perspective of the Day of Judgement.

The aim of our contribution to this volume is to provide a short introduction to Boendale's 'How Writers Should Write' against the background of Middle Dutch literature in the first half of the fourteenth century. The article is followed by a translation of Boendale's treatise by Erik Kooper.

'How Writers Should Write' is a concise poetics in the sense of a

coherent and systematic exposition of the general requirements to be met by serious writers of poetry and prose. As such, it is rather exceptional, because only a few vernacular treatises on the writer's craft have come down to us from the Middle Ages, and these few are mostly concerned with giving practical instruction on formal matters like stanza forms and rhymes.² Moreover, Boendale's views on literature reveal a superficial relationship at most with either classical or medieval Latin *artes poeticae*. On the face of it, what we have here is – to quote W. H. Auden – 'what a poet has to say about the nature of poetry'.³ It is important to note that throughout his treatise Boendale denotes the writing of poetry or prose by the verb *dichten*, which in Middle Dutch usually refers to the writing of poetry. Similarly, his word *dichter* (poet) denotes the literary craftsman, the writer of poetry or prose. As *dichtre*, Aristotle, Saint Jerome and the historians Sigebert of Gembloux and Vincent of Beauvais are put on a par with Ovid, Horace and the Middle Dutch poet Jacob van Maerlant.

In the opening lines of his text, Boendale notes with astonishment that *leke* (laymen) want to write – in verse or in prose – on all kinds of subjects as if they were *clerken* (clerics, *litterati*). This, he says, is what made him decide to point out which requirements should be met by any writer who wishes to write in the appropriate manner, for writing is not child's play. To the modern ear, this sounds as if Boendale, as an experienced professional, offers instruction to literary amateurs. In a medieval context, however, the word *leec* (*laicus*) never means 'amateur'; on the level of intellectual status, it refers to somebody who has no direct access to the Latin sources of knowledge.⁴ In the preceding chapter, Boendale has enumerated the layman's arts, as opposed to the seven liberal arts, all of which are based on writing and are the prerogative of the *clerici*.⁵ The arts of the layman are predominantly practical: agriculture, the forging and casting of metals, textile work, shipbuilding and navigation, healing. These are called bastard arts because they all have to do with manual labour.⁶

The requirements a true writer should meet, in Boendale's view, are threefold. He should be a *gramarijn* (grammarian), he should be truthful, and he should be of irreproachable conduct.

The first prescription is worked out in a series of general statements on the importance of grammar for the writer and on the principles of literary composition. Grammar – which 'comes before

anything else' – provides instruction about how to use one's language properly in speaking and in writing. In drafting a literary work, care must be taken to arrange the matter into three parts: a beginning, a middle part and a fitting conclusion. The prologue is to expound what follows; authorities must be invoked and instructive examples given in the appropriate places. Most of Boendale's instruction is elementary and rather unspecific, and it is hard to see to whom it could have been of any practical value. Still, the customary assumption is that Boendale is referring to literary composition in the vernacular. In this view, the word *gramarijn* is to be interpreted, in accordance with the authoritative *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, as 'linguist' or 'philologist', or to be taken in a less literal sense as 'somebody who uses his language well', 'a good stylist'.⁷ There can be little doubt, however, that Boendale means something quite different.

In our view, the words *gramarie* and *gramarijn* refer to *grammatica*, the first of the liberal arts. A *gramarijn* is somebody who has studied *grammatica*,⁸ in other words: somebody who has been taught how to speak and to write in Latin. The context not only bears this out but also reveals what Boendale is hinting at. In order to be a good writer, he specifies, one has to be a *gramarijn* and to know at least one's *parten* (parts, parts of speech). The reference to the *partes orationis*, the parts of speech that are the elements of Latin grammar, is unmistakable. There is no evidence that the word *parten* was used as early as this in the teaching of the Dutch language or in the context of a scholarly reflection on the linguistic properties of the vernacular. Somebody who does not know his parts of speech, Boendale maintains, somebody who does not have at least a basic knowledge of Latin, that is, can never be a good writer, no matter whether he writes in French, in Dutch or in Latin. Those who are unaware of the importance of Latin – *as is the case with laymen* – can never be any good as writers, since they lack the foundation which is the distinguishing mark of the good writer.

In the medieval context it is obvious that this does not mean that Boendale advises lay writers to learn Latin. If he has any advice to offer it is addressed to the intended public of his *Leken spieghel*, or conceivably to his aristocratic patrons, Rogier van Leefdale, chancellor of the duchy of Brabant, and his wife Agnes van Cleef.⁹ Disguised as a plea for the importance of *grammatica*, his advice to them is not to trust lay writers.

Truthfulness is Boendale's second requirement. A writer should be conscious of the fact that his work will endure and will continue to be critically examined by its readers. If any falsity is found in it, this will cost the writer his reputation. The need for veracity is paramount when one is writing on historical or religious subjects. In Antiquity, he claims, one had to have been an eye-witness in order to be allowed to write history, as is shown by the example of Dares the Phrygian, who could not have described the Trojan War if he had not been an eye-witness to it. The word *historia*, according to Boendale, is derived from a Greek verb meaning 'to see'.¹⁰ Two reasons are given why falsehood should be scrupulously avoided in historical writing. The first is the risk that blame or honour might be heaped on the wrong person, the second the risk that the untrustworthy writer might imperil his immortal soul because he will have to account for his lies in the hereafter.

It is obvious that there is more to this than a laudable concern for truthfulness in historiography.¹¹ Boendale has an axe to grind. His *bête noire* is a class of people he denotes as 'liars who fabricate falsehoods which they dress up craftily and frame with specious words'. The thirteenth-century poet Jacob van Maerlant, whom Boendale admiringly calls 'the father of all Dutch poets', is invoked in testimony. In a famous chapter in his *Spiegel historiael* (*The Mirror of History*), Jacob van Maerlant had poured out the vials of his wrath upon the disseminators of lies and twaddle on serious historical matters. Decrying them as *boerderers* (fantasts), he denounced the poets of pseudo-historical versified stories about Charlemagne who in his view violated historical truth as it was found in the works of Einhard and (Pseudo-)Turpinus.¹² Elsewhere he repudiated Arthurian romances featuring fictitious characters like Perceval and Galahad.¹³ Although early in his career Maerlant had translated Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie* and *Merlin*, he later came to reject all deviations from historical truth in Arthurian matters.¹⁴ The truth, as he saw it, was only to be found in the Latin historiographical tradition as represented by Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. In a previous work, his encyclopaedic *Der naturen bloeme* (*Flowers of Nature*), Maerlant had launched a vehement attack against the *menestrele* (minstrels) who, as garrulous as the jay, disgorge a continuous stream of lies and nonsense.¹⁵ Although Maerlant here obviously adopts the traditional clerical stance against the *ioculatores*, the wording of the passage leaves no doubt that he has the

same kind of people in view as in his outburst against the *boerderers*. That makes it plausible that Maerlant's mendacious minstrels are to be identified with Boendale's 'liars who fabricate falsehoods'.¹⁶ The two poets, both schooled (albeit in various degrees) in Latin literacy, look down their noses on their rivals, whose work was rooted in the vernacular oral tradition.

Boendale gives several examples of what he considers as the irresponsible behaviour of storytellers. It is difficult to decide whether he is referring to an oral tradition or to a written work which stemmed from oral tradition but had, so to speak, surfaced in the vernacular written literature. A case in point is his mentioning of a story about Charlemagne going out to steal. This almost certainly refers to the well-known Middle Dutch epic *Karel ende Elegast*. Although the earliest testimonies to the existence of a written version of this epic are manuscript fragments dating from the second half of the fourteenth century,¹⁷ it seems probable that a written version was extant when Boendale was writing his *Der leken spiegel*.¹⁸ But this, of course, does not exclude the possibility of his referring to an oral version which may have existed side by side with the written one. That an oral tradition is meant seems more likely in the case of Boendale's reference to a story in which Charlemagne is said to owe his name to the fact that his father had sired him while lying with a servant girl on a cart. The irreverent pun on the words *Karel* and *kar* and the motif of the illegitimate birth of the great emperor are unknown from elsewhere;¹⁹ they might stem from a 'subversive' oral tradition in which Charlemagne was depicted as a bastard. But it is difficult to see why this oral tradition would have been taken seriously or even have been felt as threatening if it had not emerged in written form as an alternative version of history. Boendale's third example has the flavour of local gossip. According to the storytellers, the great Octavian, who was to become the Emperor Augustus, was born at a place called 'At the Seven Tumuli' near Louvain. Boendale, who obviously knows the local situation, ridicules this story by asking his readers why a great Roman lady like Octavian's mother would have chosen such a desolate spot at a great distance from Rome in order to give birth to her child.

Whether Boendale's scorn is aimed at the repertory of oral performers or – what on the whole seems more likely – at the literary products of an emergent class of lay writers is as yet an unsolved question. So much is certain, however, that a disinterested care for

the truthfulness of historical writing is not his only motive. There is more than a hint of professional jealousy in his exclamation that those responsible for the fabrication of such lies should be forbidden to write. He sees through their design of gaining the public's favour by pandering to its hunger for news, for unheard stories. And he is under no illusion as to their ultimate aims, which are either material gain or making a name for themselves.

But what about fiction? Boendale begins by admitting that fabulists like Aesop and Avian wrote stories about speaking animals. But they did so, he maintains, for the sake of the instruction their stories provide. Their fables enable one to understand human nature. The same goes for the beast epic. A meaning which is hard to grasp can be clarified by examples, as is shown by the Lord's parables in the New Testament. Telling a fictitious comic story – Boendale uses the word *boerdeken*, a diminutive of the word *boerde* which usually denotes the same genre as the Old French *fabliau* – is permissible as long as nobody's honour is injured. Still, it is better not to imperil one's soul by idle talk.

At the end of the extensive argument on the importance of truth in historiography this short passage on fictitious genres (183–206) seems to come like an afterthought. It looks as if Boendale entrenches himself behind the familiar lines of Latin literary theory with its concepts of *historia*, *fabula* and *integumentum*, in order to avoid getting involved in a discussion about fiction of the kind found, for example, in the Arthurian romances. On the other hand, his knowledge of literary theory was probably confined to rather elementary notions. His use of the word *dichter* to indicate poets as well as historians suggests that he was unfamiliar with the traditional distinction between *poeta* and *historiographus*.²⁰ From the point of view of medieval literary theory, Boendale's contrast between the serious writers of history relying on the great Latin tradition on the one hand and the confabulating lay poets on the other (with fabulists, writers of beast epics and other moralists somewhere in between) looks like a rather crude version of a sophisticated theory. If one considers Boendale's argument against the background of the gradual spread of literacy, however, it reveals some of the social and artistic tensions between *clerici literati* and *laici illiterati*. By gradually acquiring literate habits the latter were challenging the age-old monopolies of the former. Learned and lay writers became rivals, competing for the favours of the same patrons. Boendale, loyal to the

intellectual and cultural ideals of the *clerici*, emphasizes the difference between the two groups by painting the lay poets as black as he can.

Having mentioned briefly that the same rigorous attachment to truth should be pursued in all kinds of religious writing, Boendale proceeds to a discussion of the third requirement to be met by the writer: respectability. If a writer is to teach and admonish everybody else, including the clergy and the powers that be, his manner of life should be irreproachable, for virtue can only be effectively taught by a virtuous teacher. It seems plausible that Boendale here, under the guise of a plea for respectability as conditional to the writer's profession, is having a sly dig at his rivals. Since the early Middle Ages *ioculatores* were traditionally held to be infamous.²¹ They were seen as prostituting their bodies, as being ready to lay down their honour for money. Many of them were suspected of owing their art to demons or to the devil. According to the *Sachsenspiegel*, the famous thirteenth-century Low German law-book, if a *spelman* (minstrel) had been hit, he was allowed to hit back the *shadow* of his enemy in compensation, since, as a later gloss explains, 'minstrels and buffoons are not like other human beings, for they have only a semblance of humanity (*ein Schein der Menschheit*) and are almost like the dead'.²² However, although the old suspicions never completely died out, there can be no doubt that the minstrel's profession, at least the upper layers of it, underwent a social rise in the course of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many minstrels gave up their wayfaring life in order to enter the service of some prince or great lord; others travelled as celebrated artists from court to court. Gradually even the Church became more pliable in its attitude towards the *ioculatores*. The thirteenth-century cleric Thomas Cabham, who was to become archbishop of Canterbury, listed the various kinds of *histriones* in his *Summa de poenitentia*; all of them were considered damnable, with the exception of *ioculatores*, who by singing the heroic deeds of kings and the lives of saints bring consolation to the hearts of their fellow men.²³ For Boendale it was clearly impossible to accept *ioculatores* of this type, lay poets as well as performers, as respectable literary craftsmen.

In support of his emphasis on the importance of respectability for the contemporary writer Boendale refers to a number of great authors from the past who all excelled in virtue. His list is a curious one. Moses as author of the Pentateuch is followed by Flavius

Josephus, the great authority on Jewish history. Classical antiquity is represented by a mixed bag of philosophers (Aristotle, Plato, Seneca and Boethius), poets (Horace and Ovid; Virgil is conspicuously absent), and one historiographer (Orosius). Saint Jerome is praised as translator of the Bible and the Psalter – the literalness of his rendering is held up as a model to all those who translate writings from one language into another. A translator should never depart from the words of his *auctoer* (a term meaning ‘author’ as well as ‘authority’). Two medieval historians are cited: the chronicler Sigebert of Gembloux and Vincent of Beauvais, author of the *Speculum historiale*, who, according to Boendale, was a good Latinist as well as a truthful and respectable man. None of these good *clerke*, he maintains, ever wrote for gain or to ingratiate himself with his public, but only, as his nature urged him to do, in order to serve the general weal. Finally, as if *hors concours*, a single vernacular writer is mentioned: Boendale’s admired predecessor Jacob van Maerlant, in whose works no lie was ever found.

In the final section of ‘How Writers Should Write’ Boendale discusses the innate character of literary talent and the qualities of the true writer. Nature determines who will be a good writer, and no amount of teaching could make up for the absence of this gift. Good writing, moreover, can only spring from a pure mind, unencumbered by worries, greed or malice. This is why good writers, who uphold virtue and truth and are of honourable conduct, deserve a generous remuneration. They fulfil an essential role by preserving the corpus of written traditions on which the Faith and human society are founded. In Boendale’s view talent, the gift of Nature, is linked with disinterestedness. The true writer writes disinterestedly, and this is what makes him different from other types of writers. Those who write on love (he probably refers to lyrical poets) compose their works in order to gain the favours of their sweethearts. Others write to become famous or for material gain. None of these sorts of writer are prompted by Nature, whereas the true writer feels an inner urge to write; he would write even if he found himself in complete isolation and without any chance of receiving a reward for his work.

It will be clear that Boendale’s ‘How Writers Should Write’ is not a set of suggestions for the benefit of inexperienced writers, and still less a disinterested enquiry into the nature of authorship or of literary work. Rather, it is to be viewed as a piece of literary

criticism or even as a polemic. In a sense Auden's remark that all that poets really say about the nature of poetry is 'Read me. Don't read the other fellows' also applies to Boendale.²⁴ If one studies 'How Writers Should Write' against the backdrop of the 'literarification' of medieval oral literature, it has a fascinating story to tell about the rivalry between *clerici* and *laici* as providers of literary instruction and entertainment in the first half of the fourteenth century. Boendale's 'defence of poetry' sheds light on the clerical reaction to the emergence of a written literature based upon oral traditions and produced by laymen.

JAN VAN BOENDALE: *DER LEKEN SPIEGHEL*, BOOK III,
CHAPTER 15

*Translated by Erik Kooper*²⁵

HOW WRITERS SHOULD WRITE
AND

WHAT THEY SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO

Since laymen²⁶ want to write, in verse or in prose, on all kinds of subjects as if they belonged to the literate²⁷ (however strange this may seem), I have resolved to expound what is characteristic of a writer who will write well and in the appropriate manner – for writing is not child's play (8).

A writer has to meet three requirements and I will tell you which: he must know his Latin grammar,²⁸ he must also be truthful and finally be of irreproachable conduct – only thus can he lay claim to the title of writer (14).

Grammar comes before anything else; it teaches us to use the language well: to join the words together properly (each word in turn keyed to the others) and to write and spell correctly, and to put into words what he wants to say with precision (20). Also one should devise beforehand how to begin one's writing, how to arrange the middle part and how the end; nor should one digress from one's subject (24).

The prologue at the beginning should adumbrate what is to follow. References to authorities as well as instructive examples [*auctoriteite ende exemple*] should, in my opinion, be placed in a fitting position, and as required by the content (32).

The end of one's writing should wind up all that has preceded and to this purpose the appropriate words should be applied, suitable to the subject at hand (36).

Therefore it is right to say that a writer must have a good command of grammar, for those who do not realize what kind of art grammar is – like laymen – can never be successful as writers, as they lack the grounding which is the sign of the true writer (44). What use is it to elaborate on this? He must be a grammarian and at least know how to parse: this is the beginning of all arts (48). If he does not know anything of that you may be certain that he is not a good writer, nor ever will be one, whether he writes in French, Dutch or Latin (52).

The second point I mentioned is truthfulness. Writers should rightly make every attempt to avoid lies; for he who writes is a Poet,²⁹ that is, someone who desires his teachings and his writings to be known by all, and to stand forever (60). Should it be found out that his writings are not true he will, quite justly, never again be believed; he has forfeited the right to write and lost the title of writer, and will consequently forever stand in ill repute (66).

There are two things, among all the others, about which one should certainly never lie (68).

The first of these is the description of historical events, for on no account should one tolerate even the smallest falsehood in this. Formerly, in classical antiquity, no one was allowed to chronicle events unless he had witnessed them, as Dares did the Trojan war (75). He himself saw the true course of the entire war, which he described elegantly and accurately, just as he saw it with his eyes – for no one would have been able to describe it but he who saw it (81). For that is how it used to be done – and actually still should, if one were to proceed correctly. That is why it is called 'hystoria' (85).

Hystoria, as I understand, derives from *hysteron*; as far as I know this is Greek and means as much as 'to see', because in this matter no one was trusted but he who observed it. For this reason those who are engaged in writing should keep their eyes wide open when they treat historical matters (93). The way in which things happen is so inscrutable that one easily bends the truth (as a wise man teaches us), assigning honour to some who are not entitled to it while heaping blame on others who deserve all the credit (100). Partly this is due to ignorance, but envy often contributes to it and also favouritism, which muzzles the truth (104). Indeed, because of this many an act of heroism and many virtuous and fine deeds remain

hidden, suppressed by envy (108). It is a sad thing that not everyone is rewarded according to his good or bad deeds; and yet that would have been justice (112). Holy Scripture states clearly that lies lead the soul to damnation and that we shall have to answer for all idle talk when the just Judge will pass judgement on this entire world (118).

Jacob van Maerlant too, who is the father of all Dutch poets,³⁰ abuses the liars who fabricate falsehoods which they dress up craftily and frame with specious words, as with Charlemagne and Octavian (and with other great men as well), to whom they attribute things that never happened to them (128). It does not do their reputation any good to tell fables about such people, as the truth is quite sufficient to praise them in many ways (132).

The story goes³¹ that Charlemagne³² went out to steal; I tell you, quite frankly, that Charlemagne never stole. Some also claim vociferously that he was called Charlemagne because his father begot him on a waggon, on a maidservant (139). May God cut short the life of him who first conceived this lie and sent it into the world (142). For Pepijn, his father, was a saintly man, be sure of that, and begot Charlemagne on his wife, to whom he had plighted his troth in accordance with the precepts of Holy Church (147). His mother was called Lady Bertraet, and was, as we read, the daughter of an emperor, called Heraclius. His grandfather, if you want to know, was called Charles Martel and had been begotten in adultery, but we cannot find out whether that was on a cart [*karre*]³³ or on a waggon; to my knowledge books never refer to it (156).

They would also have us believe that the Emperor Octavian was born near Louvain at a place that we hear called 'At the Seven Tumuli' (161). In my opinion those who are dawdling away their time by circulating this falsehood are acting very stupidly (164). Octavian's mother was Julius' sister, a native, as I read, of the city of Rome (167). What need could this lady possibly have felt to seek a field desolate and bare, in cold and in wind, four hundred miles from there, there to lie in labour?(172) May they meet with disfavour who devise and fabricate such lies, because they who thus tell lies about an honourable man are guilty of slander. One should forbid them to write (177). It is true that they want to present people with something new, something they like to hear, but they also do so because they can make a good profit on it, or make a name for themselves (182).

It is true that Aesop and Avian have written a wide variety of

writings about animals, as if they could talk (that is because of the lessons that can be learnt from them and by means of which one can understand human nature better), and the same is true of many another poem, for example about Reynard and Ysegrim, Bruun the bear and Grimbeert the badger (191). These have been composed entirely for the purpose of instruction and wisdom, as I told you before, for a meaning that is difficult to grasp can be elucidated by instructive examples; after all, God himself couched the sermons that he preached in parables (198).

On the other hand you should know that there is nothing against telling a little pleasantry, even if it is about something that never happened, to make people laugh – provided it will harm no one's reputation (203). Yet one had better refrain from this, for on the Day of Judgement we shall have to account for all idle talk. Therefore, when writing history one must on no account tell lies (208).

The second point I want to raise next: this concerns sacred writings, like saints' lives (211). About things that have happened to them [i.e. the saints] or that pertain to Holy Church one should not say one word which is a lie (214). For Holy Church has been established on Jesus Christ, the heavenly light, who alone is truth and with whom no lie is compatible (218).

The third of the three things that writers should conform to is, as I have remarked before, respectability (222). For writers who, in their writings, want to edify the entire world, who want to teach virtuousness and wisdom to the clergy, knights and other lords, and often admonish them, these should, in my opinion, all the more apply themselves to virtue (229). It is not at all fitting for a teacher not to exercise himself the virtues that he teaches others, as Cato, that wise man, explains so clearly in his book (234).

Now note who were writers in the days of old: Moses, our holy ancestor, who at the time composed all of the five beautiful and splendid books that constitute the beginning of the Bible (240).

The excellent Flavius Josephus, who wrote the history of the Jews and many other scholarly books, was respectable in all his writings (244).

Aristotle and Cato, Seneca and also Plato, Horace and Ovid, Boethius and Orosius, these were writers throughout their lives – and some of them historiographers as well – and always exercised virtue and practised themselves what they taught (252).

St Jerome, the holy enlightener and noble writer of merit, with great effort translated the Bible from Hebrew into Latin, as well as the psalter and many another great work in addition to these. Everywhere he adhered to the truth, for the Latin is truly so much like the Hebrew that one nowhere observes that the one is different from the other (264). Similarly writers who translate writings from one language into another should under no circumstances presume to write something that is different from their original (270). For from the word of the author³⁴ one should not deviate an inch, nor stray from the subject matter in the least, as I explained to you above (274).

Also Sigebert of Gembloux always wrote the truth, for he was a chronicler and one of the best ever (278).

Also Vincent of Beauvais, the Jacobite, who so splendidly completed in Latin the four Parts of the *Spiegel historiael* [*Speculum historiale*], was (as you should know) an excellent Latinist,³⁵ truthful and honest (284).

These were the learned men³⁶ who formerly committed to writing great works, not to court favour or for love of gain, but – because their nature compelled them to do so – for the sake of common profit (290).

Nor did anyone ever observe Jacob van Maerlant to write or concoct lies, however carefully one scrutinized his work, for his life was irreproachable, like a true writer should (296).

If someone is to be a true writer this depends largely, or entirely, on whether this has been granted him at his birth by Nature, together with all that goes with it (300). No living creature could ever teach him this if Nature has not given him this talent, for writing is not child's play (304). It must spring from a pure mind, in which there is no distress, greed, or malice either, with which many have been contaminated (308).

In any event, true writers, who honour virtue and veracity and moreover live respectably, are worth a generous remuneration (312). One could not do without them, for the New and the Old Testament, all the law and all its codifications, and in addition to that all that we believe in, charters and histories, which deserve to be remembered, would all have come to naught if it had not been for the writer, through whose activities in composing and writing they have been preserved (322).

Now I want to tell you of what nature writers are. There is the type who writes about love because he wants to win over his lady-love (326). Then there are those who apparently write because they would like to have their names widely known. Others again write simply for profit (329). But this kind of writing is not innate by Nature, for they are writing for material gain without the promptings of Nature (333). God knows that a true writer, even if he were in the middle of a wood where he would never again derive any form of recognition for his writing, would nevertheless not be able to stay there for even a short while without writing, for it is part of his nature: he could not help doing it, even if he wanted to (341). Writing must spring from an unencumbered heart and a clear mind, which may God preserve for every writer who loves truth. Hereby this treatise is finished (346).

NOTES

- 1 The only complete edition is that by M. de Vries in the series *Werken uitgegeven door de Vereniging ter bevordering der Oude Nederlandsche Letterkunde*: Jan van Boendale, gezegd Jan de Clerc: *Der leken spiegel, leerdicht van den jare 1330*, 3 vols., ed. M. de Vries (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1844-8). The authors of the present article are preparing a new edition of Boendale's chapter on 'How Writers Should Write'.
- 2 The earliest example in Old French (as distinct from Occitan) literature is Eustache Deschamps' *Art de dictier* (1392). See for an Old Icelandic poetics Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's 'Ars poetica' and Medieval Theories of Language*. Studies in Northern Civilization 4 (Odense: The Viking Collection, 1987).
- 3 W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 52. The quotation is from Auden's inaugural lecture 'Making, Knowing and Judging', which he delivered before the University of Oxford on 11 June 1956.
- 4 For an illuminating discussion of the medieval pairs of antitheses *laicus* vs. *clericus* and *litteratus* vs. *illitteratus* we refer the reader to M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307* (London: Arnold, 1979), pp. 175-201. See also Klaus Schreiner, 'Laienbildung als Herausforderung für Kirche und Gesellschaft. Religiöse Vorbehalte und soziale Widerstände gegen die Verbreitung von Wissen im späten Mittelalter und in der Reformation', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 11 (1964), 257-354.
- 5 Boendale, *Der leken spiegel*, Book III, chapter 14, 109-26.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 121-2; cf. 47-51.
- 7 E. Verwijs and J. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, vol. II, col. 2110.

- 8 In chapter 14, 71–8, Boendale discusses *gramarie* as the first of the seven liberal arts, stressing that a command of *gramarie* is to be considered a minimal requirement of a writer.
- 9 The Brussels manuscript Royal Library 15,658 contains a dedication to Duke John III of Brabant. References to studies on Boendale's patrons and intended public can be found in W. P. Gerritsen, 'De dichter en de leugenaars. De oudste poetica in het Nederlands', *De nieuwe taalgids* 85 (1992), 2–13, esp. p. 7, note 20.
- 10 Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford University Press, 1911), vol. i, xli,3. Isidore's etymology recurs in many medieval treatises on literary theory. See for instance Conrad of Hirsau's *Dialogue of the Authors*, in A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, eds., *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100 – c. 1375. The Commentary-Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 43.
- 11 See for the theoretical background of this discussion Peter von Moos, 'Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter. Zum Mimesis-Problem an Beispiel einiger Urteile über Lucan', *Paul und Braunes Beiträge* 98 (1976), 93–130, and Walter Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter, von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), esp. pp. 222–34.
- 12 See Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael*, ed. M. de Vries and E. Verwijs (Leiden, 1861–79; rpt. Utrecht: HES, 1982, 4 vols.), Part iv (*Vierde Partie*), Book 1, chapter 29 (= vol. iii, pp. 204–5).
- 13 Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael*, Part iii (*Derde partie*), Book v, chapters 49, 16–24, and 54, 51–60 (= vol. ii, pp. 333 and 343).
- 14 See W. P. Gerritsen, 'Jacob van Maerlant and Geoffrey of Monmouth', in Kenneth Varty, ed., *An Arthurian Tapestry. Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe* (Glasgow: The French Department of the University, 1981), pp. 368–88.
- 15 See Jacob van Maerlant, *Naturen bloeme*, 2 vols., ed. E. Verwijs (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1878), Book iii, 2111–50 (= vol. i, pp. 244–5).
- 16 See the discussion of this passage in W. P. Gerritsen, 'De dichter en de leugenaars', pp. 2–6.
- 17 See A. M. Duinhoven, *Bijdragen tot reconstructie van de Karel ende Elegast*, vol. 1. Neerlandica Traiectina 21 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), pp. 61–118. A recently discovered fragment has been edited by J. W. Klein, 'De Gentse fragmenten van de "Karel ende Elegast"', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 105 (1989), pp. 85–131.
- 18 Boendale's phrase 'Men leest dat Kaerle voer stelen' (literally: 'One reads that Charles went out to steal') points to a written version.
- 19 See G. Huet, 'La légende de Charlemagne bâtarde et le témoignage de Jean Boendale', *Le Moyen Age*, 2nd series, 15 (1911), 161–73.
- 20 See Peter von Moos, 'Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter'.
- 21 See Edmond Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*. Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes (Paris: Champion, 1910), pp. 25–43, Werner Danckert, *Unehrliche Leute, Die verfemten Berufe* (Bern and Munich:

- Francke, 1963), pp. 214–62, and Walter Salmen, *Der fahrende Musiker im europäischen Mittelalter* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1960), pp. 61–90, and compare Franz H. Bäuml, ‘“Guot umb êre nemen” and Minstrel Ethics’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 59 (1960), 173–83.
- 22 The passage is quoted by Danckert, *Unehrliche Leute*, pp. 224–5.
- 23 The passage in Thomas Cabham’s *Summa* is quoted by Faral, *Les Jongleurs*, p. 67, n. 1.
- 24 See n. 3 above.
- 25 The translation is based on the new edition of the text by W. P. Gerritsen, H. van Dijk, Orlanda S. H. Lie and A. M. J. van Buuren (in preparation); in preparing the present one the translation in Modern Dutch by W. P. Gerritsen proved very helpful. The numbers in parentheses brackets represent the line numbers of the original text. I am very grateful to all four scholars mentioned for their willingness to spend a number of hours with me on the interpretation and translation of the text.
- 26 *Laymen*, Middle Dutch *leke*, here referring to those not trained in the school subjects.
- 27 Middle Dutch *clerken*; the contrast between Middle Dutch *leken* and *clerken* is the same as that between Middle English *lewed* and *lerned*.
- 28 Middle Dutch *Hi moet sijn een gramarijn* – lit. he must be a grammarian, that is, he must have had a proper schooling in the Latin *ars grammatica*.
- 29 This is the only place in the text where Boendale uses the word *poëte* instead of *dichter*, hence the capital in ‘Poet’.
- 30 In order to retain the parallel with the same expression in other languages, Dutch *dichtren* has in this one instance been translated as ‘poets’ instead of ‘writers’.
- 31 Middle Dutch *men leest*, lit. ‘one reads’.
- 32 Middle Dutch *Karel*; this is very close to the Middle Dutch word for cart, *karre*, a resemblance Boendale will use in a pun below.
- 33 The pun *Karel–karre* would be preserved in a translation like ‘Charle-wain’, suggested by my colleague Piet Verhoeff, whose help with a number of translation problems I gladly acknowledge here.
- 34 Du. *auctoer*; the word is used only here and should probably be connected with the Latin words *auctor* and *auctoritas*. For a brief discussion of these terms, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship. Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), pp. 9–12, and for their etymology M.-D. Chenu, ‘*Auctor, actor, autor*’, *Bulletin du Cange* 3 (1927), 81–6.
- 35 Du. *gramarijn*; cp. n. 4 above.
- 36 Middle Dutch *clerke*, lit. ‘clerics’.

CHAPTER 15

From food therapy to cookery-book

Ria Jansen-Sieben

Discussion of which foods are healthy and which are not has been going on for years. Rows of cookery-books and numerous columns in magazines tell us how to keep our physique in shape (or to bring it into shape) by a diet which is nourishing, and carefully selected and adapted, often with a preference for products of the health-food industry. Calories are not popular, but *diets* are no longer solely slimming diets: they are also recommended prophylactically and even prescribed therapeutically. In short, the interest in the medical aspects of our food keeps the (rich) world intensively busy, scientifically and commercially.

These are modern problems, but they have very ancient ancestors.

In Classical Antiquity medicine already had the double aim of conserving as well as restoring one's health: 'Medicina est conservatio sanitatis et curatio aegritudinis' (Medicine is the art whereby health is conserved and the art whereby it is restored, after being lost).¹ In both medical fields, food played an important part: the 'ingredients' or *simplicia*, just like the 'preparations' or *composita*, belonged to the field of polypharmacopoeia.

A large number of medical treatises containing modes of life, viz. regimens and diets, arise from this point of view. The distinction between the two categories is based on the division in medicine: the *diet* includes mainly curative eating prescriptions and has, therefore, highly variable contents. The *regimen*, on the other hand, consists of preventive rules for people's health. It is much more detailed and complex in composition and structure, and principally deals with the six *res non naturales* on which, according to Avicenna, our health depends, viz. inhaled air, sleeping and waking, rest and motion, emptiness and fullness of the body, the inner life and food. All great

physicians from antiquity and the Middle Ages show an intense interest in the food of sick and healthy people.

The starting-point is the simple observation that man only takes in food and air. Then, all of a sudden, the disease is present in the body. Logically this is only possible through the two known factors, air and food.² Consequently, provided that the right precautions are taken, illness can be avoided and even be cured by administering adequate correctives. With this aim in view special cookery-books were compiled for the sick, like the *Summula de preparatione ciborum et potuum infirmorum secundum Musandinum* (*Short Compendium of the Preparation of Food and Drink for the Sick According to Musandinus*), of which innumerable manuscripts are known to exist.

The result is the formulation of a medically based food theory (bromatology): detailed catalogues were compiled³ for every conceivable sort of food, mentioning the positive and negative characteristics, the baleful or therapeutic effects, the exact applications, and all Galenic qualities (i.e. the four elementary qualities – hot, cold, dry, wet – as well as their combinations), with or without a subdivision into degrees. A brilliant example is the tabular synopsis of Ibn Butlan, an Arab physician from the eleventh century, *Taqwin al-sihha* (*Table of Health*),⁴ latinized to *Tacuinum sanitatis* in the thirteenth century, and in the sixteenth century translated into German (among others) as *Schachtafelen der Gesundheit*, published in Strasburg (1533). In chapter 25 ('Von süßen Speisen, den einfachen, und zusammen setzen'), 'honey' is defined under eleven headings as follows:

Die Natur: heyssz unnd trucken. *Die Grad*: heyssz unnd trucken im andern. *Das best dass du in der art findest*: Der jung ist. *Sein hilff*: Er reynigt unnd laxiert, verhüt vor zerstörung fleysch unnd änderung, unnd feüchte. *Sein schad den es thut*: Er macht durst. *Wie man den schaden abwendt*: Mit weinsaur en öpfelen. *Landschaft*: Gebürgen. *Die zeyt*: Im winter. *Das Alter*: Den uralten. *Complexion*: Kalten. *Was es gebürt*: Heyssz blut.

(*Its nature*: hot and dry. *Its degree*: hot and dry to the second degree. *The best kind to be found*: That which is young. *Its effect*: It purifies and purges, it protects the flesh against decay, alteration and moisture. *The harm it does*: It makes thirsty. *How to meet the harm*: With vinegar and apples. *Landscape*: Mountains. *The season*: Winter. *The age*: the aged. *Complexion*: For cold complexions. *What it is fitting for*: Hot blood.)

In the wake of this we find the medico-literary genre of the health regimens, preferably in the form of a letter addressed to some king.

An old instructive example, interesting for our region (through this text what is probably the oldest information on Frankish nutritional habits is available to us), is the letter by the physician Anthimus to the King of the Franks (sixth century).⁵ Another well-known letter, the (apocryphal) *Epistola Aristotelis ad Alexandrem*,⁶ was rendered into various vernacular languages, and was a continuous success all through the Middle Ages. In the western world, however, the genre culminated in the extraordinarily influential *Regimen sanitatis salernitanum* (*Salernitan Health Rule*, twelfth century),⁷ which was translated, adapted, endlessly expanded, copied and plagiarized; it was attributed to Johannes Mediolanensis. Dedicated to the king of England⁸ and written in Leoninic verse, this medical-dietetical health regimen gives, amongst other things, an analysis of the positive and negative qualities of every sort of meat, fish, grain, wine, etc., and numerous practical suggestions:

De Pane. Panis non calidus, nec sit nimis inveteratus, sed fermentatus, oculatus sit, bene coctus, modice salitus: frugibus validis sit electus. Non comedas crustam, choleram quia gignit adustam. Panis salsatus, fermentatus, bene coctus, purus sit, sanus, quia non ita sit tibi vanus.⁹

(On bread. Not too warm, nor too old, well risen, with holes, well-baked, rightly salted: bread of nourishing grains is preferable. Do not eat the crust for it makes choleric. The bread must be salted, risen, well-baked, pure and healthy, if not it is of no use.)

Innumerable brief sentences from this metrical text, which is easy to memorize, became authoritative, proverbial and widely accepted knowledge. Also shortened versions (in more or less tabular form) circulated in great numbers, arranged per month, per season, per zodiac sign, etc.

What we see here is a logical result from a logical starting-point: the constant interaction between medicine and food.

PHYSICIANS AS COOKS

Historically speaking, the basic principle of appetite, the *pleasure* of eating, is of essential relevance in dietetics. It is especially important to take in the food with relish, for that is a sign which does not deceive: that which one likes can only do good to the body. 'Totes les coses ki li ont millor savour à le bouche, miex le nourrissent'.¹⁰ The apocryphal letter to Alexander also expresses this: 'Tunc ponuntur multi cibi ante te et exinde elige iuxta desiderium tuum',¹¹ 'When þu

art sett att þi mete, se þi metis be holsum, and in plenté of diuerse kyndes of metis, and ete of þem þat þin appetite moste meuiþ þe to',¹² and 'Whan a man syttyth atte mette, and dyuers maner mettis afor hym is sette, he sholde chese that wyche his harte yewyþ beste to',¹³ but the Middle Dutch text is the clearest: 'Avicenna segt dat beste smaect voedt dat beste want spyse diemen met genuechten neemt die wort wel ontfangen vander magen. . . . Spyse die sonder lust wort ghenomen en wort nyet alsoe verduwet' (Avicenna says: 'What tastes best, nourishes best, for food which one eats with pleasure will be received well by the stomach. . . . Food which is eaten without pleasure does not digest well').¹⁴ Avicenna's axiom, quoted for centuries by laymen and specialists, could be summarized as 'tasty is healthy'.

Of immediate relevance for this argument is the large number of physicians who, initially possibly as part of their dietetic therapeutics, concerned themselves with the practical, culinary aspects of preparing food. Dozens of physicians from antiquity wrote cookery-books or included recipes in their medical works: the earliest of these is Akron of Agrigentum (fifth century BC).¹⁵ After that followed an uninterrupted series of physicians engaged in producing culinary literature, from the beginning of our era up to, and even beyond, the sixteenth century. A famous example is the book of sauces by the Milanese physician Maino de Maineri (fourteenth century).¹⁶

However, in medical literature the therapeutic aspect of food is also present, if sometimes in a minimal form: virtually every classical or medieval book on medicine contains, besides the inevitable advice about food, culinary recipes or cooking suggestions as well. The Middle English *Leechbook* not only describes the preparation of sauces and drinks,¹⁷ but it also contains a fairly detailed monthly regimen. For February, for instance, it says: 'Eat no pottage made of hocks [mallows], for they are venomous', and for the month of May: 'Use hot meats. Eat not the head nor the feet of any beast, for her brain wasteth and her marrow consumeth, and all living things become faint and feeble in this month.'¹⁸ The title of a treatise attributed to Michael Scott (thirteenth century), *The Science of Dining*,¹⁹ is plain and to the point. Sixteenth-century physicians and authors of medical treatises deal extensively with the hygiene of food, such as Dr Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regiment, or A Dyetary of Helth* (1542).²⁰ German literature, too, has a large number of varied texts in this genre.²¹

Even in highly specialized texts (e.g. on gynaecology, obstetrics, andrology, paediatrics) attention is paid to food. For instance, the Salernitan *Liber minor de coitu* advises its readers to eat winesoup with meat and egg yolks in case of weakness after (too) intensive sexual activity: 'Subtilitas si ex hoc labore contingerit, ex iure carnis in vino decocte propulsabis et medium ovi in aqua decocti et molle non aspernabis' (If you feel weak after this sexual exercise, then eat winesoup with meat, and the soft yolk of a boiled egg).²²

From the preceding survey it may be concluded that for more than twenty centuries every physician was also a food specialist, an expert in preparing food, and sometimes even the author of gastronomically refined recipes.

From all this it may be concluded that medicine and the art of cooking were closely connected. The dividing line between physician and cook was sometimes extremely tenuous.

COOKS AS PHYSICIANS

In a situation as sketched above the professional cooks must also have known all that was necessary about the medical implications of their profession. Even in antiquity we know of cooks who had had an academic training and a knowledge of astrology and medicine, enjoying an eminent social status.²³ In German literature, Heinzelin von Konstanz, the learned cook of Albrecht V von Hohenburg, proficient in Latin, is known as a poet of profound arguments.²⁴ Konrad von Megenberg discusses at length the ideal abilities of a good cook in his *Yconomica*:²⁵ he must know the seasonal dietetics as well as the therapeutic qualities of the spices and the order dictated by the art of medicine for serving the dishes. He must, still according to Konrad, learn all this from a physician. The fifteenth-century cookery-book by master Eberhard von Landshut²⁶ is essentially a real *Regimen sanitatis*,²⁷ a sign that the author was a learned man in the medical field. Of course, in many cases this learned-cook image was rather utopian, that is to say, the medical expertise of most cooks presumably will not have been much greater than that of the average layman; on the other hand, this does not necessarily exclude some practical knowledge of dietetics.

The history of the cooks, however, begins much later than that of their colleagues, the physicians. The first clear example is Apicius (though not a cook himself), under whose name a cookery-book was

composed according to Greek examples and on a dietetic basis, in the first centuries of our era. Even medical recipes (e.g. laxative soups) were included in it.²⁸ This work is of capital importance, because, except for two fundamental modifications, it was to remain the model and source of inspiration for the majority of the western cookery-books until the late Middle Ages.²⁹

Another influential, but much later work is Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* (fifteenth century).³⁰ The title echoes Avicenna's principle: the gastronomical *voluptas* (pleasure) is completely compatible with the physical *valetudo* (health). Each recipe is provided with medical comments.

Several German manuscripts with recipes contain instructions for one's health or recipes for the sick. In the printed works the interaction is even clearer. The *Küchenmeisterei* (1486)³¹ discusses the element theory, and provides diets for gastro-intestinal diseases as well as countless medical recipes; the *Frankfurter Küchenmeisterei* (1530-1)³² even has two separate chapters with purely medical recipes.

Gundolf Keil and Marianne Wlodarczyk are absolutely right in stating that professional cooks, 'because of disturbed health of their masters were not seldom called to account, which incited them to dietetic activity and lay-medical diligence'.³³ But this can be stated even more explicitly. Repeatedly west European cookery-books emphasize the medical implications of the cook's work by the equation 'cook = physician'. The anonymous author of the *Nürnberger Küchenmeisterei* (1490) confidently claims that 'a decent cook with well-prepared natural food is in this day and age the best doctor',³⁴ and Fiera (1498) has words to the same effect: 'le cuisinier occupe une place parmi les médecins' (the cook occupies a place among the doctors).³⁵ Maistre Chiquart too, the cook of the Duke of Savoy (1420), is assumed to have cooked in a 'scientific' way, that is, in accordance with medical prescriptions,³⁶ and in Italy Domenico Romoli in *La singular dottrina* expects from 'un buon cuoco' 'che sia simile a un medico vecchio invecchiato nell'arte' (that he is like an old doctor, grown old in the art), 'arte' meaning medicine (chapter III: 'Del cuoco secreto').³⁷ He fits the action to the word: Book VIII of his cookery-book is devoted to the 'cibi grossi e di quelli delicati e dei rispettivi effetti sulla salute dell'uomo' (heavy and light dishes and their respective effects on the health of man), Book IX 'delle diete da osservare, degli sercizi fisici e dell'ordine del mangiare' (about the

diets that should be followed, the physical exercises and about the order of the dishes).³⁸

As far as can be seen from non-exhaustive research only a very tentative parallel can be drawn with English culinary literature, which seems to connect or mix the two genres to a lesser extent, or at least less explicitly. None of the numerous editions of medieval English cookery-books that I went through seemed to have included medical recipes. However, the title of the most famous and extensive collection of the fourteenth century, *The Forme of Cury*, reads as follows: 'The forme of cury was compiled of the chef Maister Cokes of kyng Richard the Secunde . . . And it was compiled by assent and auysement of Maisters of phisik and of philosophie',³⁹ and in the household ordinances of Edward IV 'we are told of the important duties of the "Doctoure of Physique," who must counsel the king and his cooks as to what dishes will suit the king best'.⁴⁰ Once in a while sixteenth-century English cookery-books give advice or a recipe in connection with health or hygiene, as in *The Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie* (1588), where we find a concoction meant as an aphrodisiac, entitled: 'A tart to provoke courage either in man or woman'.⁴¹ Although it must be admitted that the number of examples of interaction in English cookery-books is smaller, and certainly less straightforward,⁴² it appears that here, too, there is a certain, though somewhat looser, connection between the two professions.

Again the conclusion is obvious: in the second section we postulated a close connection between physician and cook, now from this comparative research emerges a close connection between cook and physician.

THE NETHERLANDS

Is it purely a coincidence that one of the oldest Dutch texts (from the year 1253) should be a monthly regimen,⁴³ or does it indicate a quantitatively or culturally significant representation of this genre? This fragment of prose, old by our standards⁴⁴ (and, moreover, a work in which occur clear traces of an even older rhymed version, now lost), provides, amongst other things, monthly advice and prescriptions in a lapidary style for the consumption of drinks and food. For the month of September it says:

du salt alle dage eten melc ende brot. sovele so it si. et gesoden peren dar bi. ende ander gvde vrught Ganse ne darftu niit vermiden. Dune salt dat niit vergeten. dune soles oec sinep eten beide mit vleische ende mit vische.

(you must eat milk and bread every day, as much as you want; eat cooked pears with it, and other good fruit. You must not avoid geese. This you must not forget: you must also eat mustard, both with meat and with fish.)

This kind of text was very popular among all layers of society, from the king down to probably the illiterate working-class man.⁴⁵ The numerous extant Middle Dutch regimens, varied in structure but always accompanied by advice on food, arranged by month, by season, by complexion, by position of the moon, or simply in general, testify to the genre's great success. The famous *Epistola Aristotelis* was translated several times,⁴⁶ and Jacob van Maerlant considered the text sufficiently important to incorporate it in his *Heimelijcheit der Heimelijcheden*.⁴⁷ It is in part due to the great success of the regimens that the principle of appetite, whether or not in a medical context, ended up in the vernacular literature.

Besides these paramedical texts, a sizeable medical specialist literature has been preserved. Some of these texts are fairly old, like the *Boec van medicinen in dietsche* (*Book of Medicine in Dutch*, thirteenth century), containing an elaborate treatise on food and drinks, strongly influenced by Avicenna's *Canon*. We can read in it, for instance, that for making bread good and pure wheat should be used, its bran taken out, with sufficient yeast and salt, that it should be baked well 'until it bursts open', that one should not eat the bread oven-fresh, but preferably after a day or two, and that one should avoid all bread that does not follow these criteria.⁴⁸ It goes without saying that dietetics play a great part in this, but that at the same time this bread is indeed very tasty, in other words, that gastronomy is already involved here. The Middle Dutch translation of Lanfranc's *Chirurgia parva* (fourteenth century) devotes an entire chapter to the nourishment of the wounded: 'Dat 9 capittel is van spisen ende dranc ten wonden luden' (The ninth chapter deals with food and drink for the wounded).⁴⁹

Just as in the classic German and English medical books, so in the Middle Dutch ones culinary recipes, with or without a dietetic basis, are very often included among medical prescriptions. A good, though not extraordinary, example is the medical book of recipes in the British Library in London (MS Sloane 345), in which, among all the ointments, syrups and suppositories, recipes are given for confectionery, conserving ginger, and preserving quinces and peels of

Seville oranges, cherry jam, gingerbread, compote, mulberry jelly, etc.⁵⁰

Usually appetite is stated to be the basic principle, as in the *Brief van Aristoteles aan Alexander*: 'Dan si dine spise ghereet, / Dan setse voer di, ende et / Van dien dat di ghenoeghet bet, / Also vele als ghenoeghet di, / Met brode dat wel gheheuen si' (When your meal is ready, put it before you and eat of it what you like best, and as much as you like, with well-risen bread).⁵¹

The *Circa instans* (c. 1150), a *simplicia-pharmacopoeia*⁵² from the Salernitan school, translated into Middle Dutch in the fourteenth century, occasionally provides the method of preparation of some herb, for example of asparagus: 'Sine vruchte siin ghelike weecken stocken, wilke vrucht men zieden sal mit vleysche ende mit watere allene' (Its fruits are like soft sticks, which one must cook with meat and water only).⁵³ In Book 19, Bartholomeus Anglicus deals elaborately with qualities, indications and contra-indications of cheese, milk, butter, eggs, meat and fish, with a separate chapter on wine.⁵⁴ Manuals of gynaecology and obstetrics too, often give detailed diet instructions for both the pregnant woman and the embryo. The list of forbidden food-stuffs is usually much longer than that of the recommendations.⁵⁵ And although there are countless examples of medical texts in the medieval *artes* corpus, interlarded or expanded with culinary advice and explanations, original or not, there is, nevertheless, not a single trace of what we would like to call a 'cookery-book' up to the second half of the fifteenth century!

From then on things begin to change, hesitantly, but very characteristically. Six out of seven late fifteenth-century manuscripts with culinary recipes are medical manuals, usually containing only a limited number of culinary recipes. The main difference from the previous period is that the culinary recipes, no matter how few of them there may be (sometimes only two, three or four), are grouped together, and look, and are meant to look, like small, separate treatises.

At the start of the sixteenth century a great change takes place: for the first time in our tradition there are voluminous collections of culinary recipes, in print and hand-written⁵⁶ – real 'cookery-books'. But only three out of ten consist of independent recipes⁵⁷ – if they were that originally; five out of the other seven collections are included in medical manuals,⁵⁸ and the remaining two have medical prescriptions inserted among the culinary recipes.⁵⁹

The first printed cookery-books were published in the same

period. The oldest was published by Thomas van der Noot around 1510. The title clearly states its intention and intended audience: *Een notable boecxken van cokeryen het welc bewijst alle spise te bereiden elc na sinen staet het si in bruylochten in feesten bancketten oft ander maeltijden besondere en het es eenen ieghelijcken van grooten noode te hebben die sijn dinghen ter eeren doen wilt* (*A remarkable little cookery book which teaches how to prepare all food to suit every circumstance, be it weddings, feasts, banquets or other special meals, and something anyone who wants to maintain his status must have*).⁶⁰ There is not much of a dietetic context. Yet, the sick are not forgotten, viz. in a recipe called 'Om een calijsken te maken . . . voer siecke lieden' (How to make a gruel for the sick; f. 3r).

Fifty years later a highly important collection of culinary recipes was published in Antwerp, entitled *Eene nyeuwen Cook Boeck*.⁶¹ It is important in more than one respect, especially for our discussion, because the authorship of this cookery-book is explicitly claimed by a physician, in a kind of preface entitled 'Den wech der ghesontheit' (The Way of Health). His quite outspoken considerations are extraordinarily interesting as he extensively and emphatically links up his function as medical doctor with that of cook by qualifying the selection and preparation of the food as a prophylactic or therapeutic treatment. An ample quotation is worth including:

Meester Gheeraert Vorselman van Grootsundert, doctoor in medicinen, leydende den ghenen die van swaren siecten beginnen te genesen tot ghesontheit. Ende den swaermoedigen ende melancoleusen menschen die haren appetijt hebben verloren, tot smaeck ende beteringe. Leerende alle manieren van coken, vlees ende vis met haren saussen als die tafel bewijzen sal. Byden voorgenoemden doctoor . . . Ende heb desen arbeyt . . . aengenomen tot profijt vanden genen die door veel sorgen, moeytsels, melancolien oft arbeyts sienen appetijt verloren heeft. Ende voor de gene dye eenighe ziecken dienen ende bisonder voor de gene die van swaren siecten genesen. Ende en heb dit niet gedaen als een coc wesende, oft daer voor uut gevende, mer gelijckerwijs in medicinen const is den gesonden in gesontheit te houden, ende den siecken te genesen, dwelc men doen mach door de const van een spise te coken so dat behoort.

(Master Gheeraert Vorselman of Grootsundert, doctor of medicine, restoring to health those who are recuperating from a serious disease, and to a new appetite and recovery the depressed and melancholy who have gone off their food; teaching all manners of cooking of meat and fish with their sauces, as the index will show. By the afore-mentioned doctor . . . And I have . . . undertaken this work to the benefit of those who have lost their appetite through many concerns, exertions, melancholy or labour, and for

who is in the service of a sick person, and especially for those who are recovering from serious diseases. And I have not done this as a cook, or by posing as one, but just as in medicine it is an art to keep the healthy in health and to cure the sick, which may be done by the art of cooking food the proper way.)

On closer inspection this cookery-book appears not to be as medical as we might gather from the preface. It is true that it contains a few medical suggestions and recipes – against the plague, coughs, constipation, kidney stones – as well as an aphrodisiac ('dit gerecht doet wel met vrouwen wesen' (this dish will make one do well with women); xiv,51). But out of approximately 500 recipes the greater part are purely culinary, with highly varied recipes, both simple and refined.⁶² This is the first time that a stage which had already been reached earlier, but which was not evident in the evolution of the genre, is explicitly confirmed, viz. that culinary literature, with a few exceptions, was mainly the work of physicians.

As we find that the next printed cookery-book⁶³ was the work of a physician as well, viz. Karel Baten or Carolus Battus (a resident of Dordrecht but born in Ghent), and that finally, just before the end of the century, the cookery-book by the physician Vorselman was reprinted,⁶⁴ this, together with the evidence from manuscript research, proves indeed that the two genres are extremely closely interwoven, with the culinary aspect being clearly subordinate to the medical aspect. In all probability this conclusion, based on the Dutch tradition (fragmentary as that may be), might *mutatis mutandis* also be applied to the German and, possibly, the English traditions, and even, though perhaps to a lesser extent, to the French.⁶⁵

FROM MEDICINE BOOK VIA DIETETICS TO COOKERY-BOOK

In a nutshell, the historical evolution of this genre looks as follows.

The Greek, Latin and Arab culinary recipes principally belong to *medical* literature.

The model, and *grosso modo* the source, of virtually all medieval culinary recipes, viz. Apicius' *Cookery-Book*, is for the greater part *dietetic* and partly *medical*.

In the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries innumerable Middle Dutch (also German, French, and to a lesser extent English) *medicine books* and *health regimens* appear, containing culinary/dietetic comments and recipes.

In the sixteenth century *cookery-books* were published in several countries, written by *physicians*.

Consequently, an enormous gap of about ten centuries exists between Apicius and the earliest western culinary literature. Certain elements in late medieval culinary culture point to a tradition which in the preceding periods probably did not rely on a 'knowledge of the rare manuscripts but on an imperfectly transmitted and slowly changing oral tradition'.⁶⁶

Hence I should like to suggest a certain continuity in the culinary culture pattern, from early Antiquity up to and including (at least) the sixteenth century. The millenary void I should like to consider as filled by medicine texts and regimens, whether written or not. In other words, the not very clear-cut culinary-dietetic tradition (or whatever it is considered to be), initially free from all its gastronomic excesses, I assume to have been disseminated, orally and in writing, by physicians, as an essential part of their art. It goes without saying that food prescriptions, lists of ingredients and culinary recipes from the earliest period must not be interpreted as 'gastronomic'. Nevertheless these are the first steps in the direction of a purely culinary literature, in which initially health and taste are combined, until taste prevails. Professional cooks experiment in the tradition of dietetics, become involved in the debate and hand their findings down orally and in writing. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries new texts come into being, which cater for an increasing interest in tasty, festive, and even playful food.

Yet, except for a few purely culinary examples, the publishing of cookery-books in the sixteenth century is still (or again?) in the hands of physicians, who, it is true, use medical arguments as an excuse but on the other hand tend to be less and less particular about these – in contrast with their predecessors. (Conversely, one could also think of the possibility that the physicians made their comeback by means of a popular type of book, viz. the vernacular medicine book; the attribution of a cookery-book to an author-physician may even have been a commercial initiative. But owing to a lack of clear information on this subject, and in view of the centuries-old tradition, the probability of such alternatives is minimal indeed.)

The hypothesis of a medical origin of culinary literature and the resulting continuity defended here is the first to give a plausible explanation for the shift in taste between antiquity and the later Middle Ages. In the dark millenary interval, new exotic spices like

nutmeg and mace, cloves, galanga and saffron, conquered the western market, slowly but radically influencing and changing the current taste.⁶⁷ These ingredients had long since become a fundamental part of the pharmacopoeia, had subsequently come to be included in all kinds of health regimens out of purely medical considerations, and had from there in all probability been transferred to the kitchen. The fact that these spices were also very expensive and, consequently, a 'signe extérieur de richesse', a sort of status symbol, can only have contributed to their success.

The evolution from dietetics to cookery-book may further have been determined, or at least been influenced, by a number of factors of diverse character and of varied importance. Medical and culinary recipes are strikingly identical, composed as they are of successive, usually short, imperative formulas, recognizable by and from the opening words: *Recipe*, *Neem*, *Take*, *Prenez*, *Nimm*, and so on. Structurally speaking, the similarity is also striking: both are 'collections', 'compilations', often written by different hands, accompanied by insertions, additions, omissions, repetitions, re-arrangements, comments for and by users and, usually, indexes. There are also numerous similarities with respect to content. The same ingredients are used in medicine and in the kitchen. The highly prized spices in the upper-class medieval kitchen were the basis of many medical recipes already in the Merovingian and Carolingian periods.⁶⁸ Numerous abbey invoices mention the purchase of large quantities of spices which could not possibly all have been incorporated in the food. So in all likelihood they were primarily destined for the abbey's pharmacy and not so much for the kitchen. As a concomitant, spices, sugar and subtropical fruits were sold in the pharmacy. Again this confirms the concrete and at the same time psychological connection between medicine and food. Another similarity as regards content is that neither in the medicine book nor in the cookery-book are quantities mentioned. It is not until the sixteenth century that this begins to change slightly. Apparently the measurement, after all essential information for physician, pharmacist and cook, was assumed to be known. In principle, one can only imagine such an attitude in writings if they are composed by professionals for professionals. The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the total lack of indication of time. Again, it is only in the sixteenth century that attempts were sporadically made to indicate the duration of certain processes.

The question that Trude Ehlert posed in the subtitle of her recently published study⁶⁹ reads 'Wie kam die Diätetik in die Kochbücher?', or, freely translated, 'How on earth did the cooks get their medical knowledge?' From the present research into the previous history, the interdisciplinary comparative examination, and the fairly clear example of the Dutch tradition, this question appears to depart from an incorrect chronological conception, and consequently is fundamentally wrong. The problem should be formulated the other way round: 'How did the cookery-book evolve from medical literature?' To this question I have attempted to provide as acceptable an answer as possible.

TRANSLATED BY EVELINE VAN VLIET

NOTES

- 1 Avicenna (= Ibn Sina), *Canon* i.1; O. Cameron Gruner, *A Treatise on The Canon of Medicine of Avicenna Incorporating a Translation of the First Book* (New York: Kelley, 1970), p. 25.
- 2 See the brilliant analysis in Robert Joly, *Le Niveau de la science hippocratique. Contribution à la psychologie de l'histoire des sciences* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1966), p. 121.
- 3 A.o. Avicenna, *Canon* i; Isaac Judaeus, *De diaetis universalis et particularibus* (tenth century), ed. Lyon, 1515, and Basle, 1570; Johannitius, *Isagoge* (ninth century), ed. Lyon, 1534; Rhases, *Liber de medicina ad Almansorem*, 1-6 (tenth century), ed. Basle, 1544.
- 4 Hosam Elkhadem, *Le Taqwim al-Sihha (Tacuini Sanitatis) d'Ibn Butlan: un traité médical du XI^e siècle*, histoire du texte, édition critique, traduction, commentaire (Louvain: Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Classe des Lettres, vol. vi. Collection Fonds René Draguet, 1990).
- 5 Ria Jansen-Sieben, *Brief des erlauchten Anthimus an Theoderich, den König der Franken* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989); Gundolf Keil, ed., *Das Lorsch'sche Arzneibuch*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989).
- 6 Extracted from the *Secreta Secretorum*, the twelfth-century Latin translation of an unpublished Arab theory of life, *Sirr-al-Asrâr*, of which several German, English and Dutch translations were made. For the German one, see Wolfgang Hirth, 'Studien zu den Gesundheitslehren des sogenannten "SECRETUM SECRETORUM", Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Prosaüberlieferungen' (unpubl. Ph. D. thesis, Heidelberg, 1969), and *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters, Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, vol. 1, 213; for the English versions, see Robert Steele, ed., *Three*

- Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*. EETS ES 74 (London, 1898), and M. A. Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum. Nine English Versions*, vol. 1: *Texts*. EETS OS 276 (Oxford University Press, 1977); for the Dutch translations see notes 11 and 47 below.
- 7 Salvatore de Renzi, ed., *Collectio Salernitana* (Napoli, 1852–59; rpt. Bologna: Forni Editore, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 417–516, and vol. v, pp. 1–104.
 - 8 According to the legend, he is supposed to be Robert, duke of Normandy, son of William the Conqueror, who, of course, never was king of England.
 - 9 'Regimen Sanitatis Salerni (Flos medicinae)', in Luigi Firpo, ed., *Medicina medievale* (Turin: Unione Tipografica – Editrice Torinese, 1972), pp. 77–135; here p. 91.
 - 10 L. Landouzy and R. Pepin, eds., *Le Régime du Corps de Maître Aldebrandin de Sienne. Texte français du XIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1911; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), p. 14. Also, Avicenna, *Canon* 1, III, II.7.
 - 11 W. L. Brackman, ed., 'Berijmde Middelnederlandse gezondheidsleer Alsoet Aristoteles Alexander oversonde', *Verslagen en Mededelingen Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* (1971), 53–78; here p. 69.
 - 12 M. A. Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, vol. 1, p. 5.
 - 13 Robert Steele, ed., *Three Prose Versions*, vol. 1, p. 241.
 - 14 W. F. Daems, ed., *Boec van medicinen in dietsche. Een middelnederlandse compilatie van medisch-farmaceutische literatuur* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), p. 214.
 - 15 Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 21 (1921), s.v. 'Kochbücher'. In addition there are Philesthion from Lokroi (fourth century BC), author of a now lost treatise on types of bread, Epainetos (100 BC), compiler of a book with recipes for fish dishes, and Euthydemus from Athens, with a book on vegetables.
 - 16 Lynn Thorndike, 'A Mediaeval Sauce-book', *Speculum* 9 (1934), 183–90; Terence Scully, 'The Opusculum de saporibus of Magnus Mediolanensis', *Medium Aevum* 54 (1985), 178–207.
 - 17 W. R. Dawson, ed., *A Leechbook or Collection of Medical Recipes of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1934), for example p. 284 (nos. 922 and 923) and p. 312 (nos. 1030 and 1031).
 - 18 Dawson, *Leechbook*, pp. 59–63. Related monthly regimens occur in G. Henslow, *Medical Works of the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1894), p. 63, and in O. Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wort-Cunning, and Star-Craft of Early England* (London, 1866), vol. II, p. 147.
 - 19 Arthur Way, trans., *The Science of Dining: a Medieval Treatise on the Hygiene of the Table* (London, 1936).
 - 20 Edited by F. J. Furnivall. EETS ES 10 (Oxford, 1870). Others are Dr Henry Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599), Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helth* (1541; ed. New York, Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints (n.d.)).
 - 21 See the references to numerous rubrics s.v. 'Monatsregeln' in the *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, vol. VI, 646. The Basle physician Michael Herr (d. 1550) translated the Byzantine cookery-book *Geoponika*, and the

- physician-lawyer Johann Coler devoted Book 3 of his *Oeconomia ruralis et domestica* to the art of cooking; cf. H. Wiswe, *Kulturgeschichte der Kochkunst* (Munich: Moos, 1970), p. 33.
- 22 E. M. Cartelle, ed., *Liber minor de coitu. Tratado menor de Andrologia anónimo salernitano* (Universidad de Valladolid, 1987), p. 66.
 - 23 Orth, s.v. 'Kochkunst', in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 21 (1921).
 - 24 Trude Ehlert, 'Wissensvermittlung in deutschsprachiger Fachliteratur des Mittelalters oder: Wie kam die Diätetik in die Kochbücher?', *Würzburger medizinhistorische Mitteilungen* 8 (1990), 147.
 - 25 S. Krüger, ed., *Konrad von Megenberg: Werke, Ökonomik* (Book 1) (Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 192-3.
 - 26 Anita Feyl, ed., *Das Kochbuch Meister Eberhards. Ein Beitrag zur altdeutschen Fachliteratur* (Freiburg: Rota Druck, Johannes Krause, 1963). See also *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, vol. 11, 289 (= G. Keil).
 - 27 Wolfgang Hirt, 'Die Diätetik im Kochbuch des Küchenmeisters Eberhart von Landshut und eine deutsche Regel der Gesundheit nach Arnald de Villanova', *Ostbairische Grenzmarken* 8 (1966), 273-81.
 - 28 Apicius Caelius (or Caelii Apicius), *De re coquinaria*. Editio princeps: *Caelii Apitii. . . . De re culinaria libri x* (Basel, 1541). English translation: B. Flower and E. Rosenbaum, *Apicius: the Roman Cookery Book. A Critical Translation* (London: Harrap, 1958; rpt. 1961).
 - 29 See Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 52, and Anne Willan, *Great Cooks and their Recipes: from Taillevent to Escoffier* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1977), pp. 16-19.
 - 30 Editio princeps: Strasburg, 1517.
 - 31 R. Ehnert, ed., *Kuchenmeysterey (Passau: bei Johann Petri, um 1486), in Abbildung herausgegeben* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1981).
 - 32 A. Schmitt, ed., *Christian Egenolff. Von Speisen, natürlichen und Kreuter Wein, aller Verstandt* (facsimile edition with an epilogue) (Leipzig, 1984).
 - 33 '... nicht selten für gestörtes Wohlbefinden ihrer Herrschaft zur Verantwortung gezogen wurden, was ihnen diätetischen Wirken und laienärztliche Beflissenheit nahelegte'; cf. Gundolf Keil und Marianne Wlodarczyk, 'Küchenmeisterei', *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, vol. v, 396-400.
 - 34 '... ein ordenlicher koch mit wolbereytter naturlicher speis ist hie in diser zeit der best artzte'; see H. Wegener, ed., *Küchenmeisterei. In Nürnberg von Peter Wagner um 1490 gedruckt*, (facsimile edition after the copy in the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel). Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft für Typenkunde des xv. Jahrhunderts, Reihe B, vol. III (Leipzig: Harrasowitz, 1939).
 - 35 L. Elaut, 'Het dieetboekje van J. B. Fiera (1498) en zijn betekenis als voorloper van de geneeskundige renaissance', *Scientiarum Historia* 6 (1964), 169-77.

- 36 Terence Scully, 'Du fait de cuisine par Maistre Chiquart 1420', *Vallesia* 40 (1985), 101-231; here p. 108. I am grateful to Henri and Rachel Chételat, Bern, for sending me this important article.
- 37 Domenico Romoli, *La singular dottrina* (1560), ed. Emilio Faccioli, in *Arte della cucina* (Milan: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 343-93.
- 38 Faccioli, *Arte della cucina*, p. 346.
- 39 C. B. Hieatt and S. Butler, eds., *Curye on Inglysch. English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century (including the Forme of Cury)*. EETS SS 8 (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 20.
- 40 Hieatt and Butler, *Curye*, p. 21.
- 41 Lorna Sass, ed., *To the Queen's Taste. Elizabethan feasts and recipes* (London: Murray, 1977), pp. 21-2.
- 42 I am aware that a statement like this has all kinds of implications.
- 43 The so-called 'Utrechtse gezondheidsregels', MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 83, last published by Maurits Gysseling, ed., *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300)*, Reeks 11: *Litteraire handschriften*. Bouwstoffen tot een Woordarchief van de Nederlandse Taal (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980), pp. 345-7.
- 44 In contrast to German, English and French literature, the Dutch text tradition begins rather late: the first literary testimonies date from the last quarter of the thirteenth century.
- 45 That this knowledge reached even the lowest classes may be concluded from the existence of metrical, concise versions, meant to be learnt by heart, and because it turns up, in one form or another, in practically all farmers' calendars.
- 46 See above, n. 6, and also Braekman, ed., 'Middelnederlandse gezondheidsleer'.
- 47 This is a thirteenth-century translation of the *Secreta Secretorum* (see above, n. 6); it was edited by A. A. Verdenius, *Jacob van Maerlant's Heimelijkheid der Heimelikheden* (Amsterdam: Kruyt, 1917).
- 48 Daems, ed., *Boec van medicinen*, p. 210. See the closely related quotation from the *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni* (above, n. 9).
- 49 Stefan Scholle, ed., *Lanfranks 'Chirurgia parva' in mittelniederfränkischer Übertragung*. Altdeutsche Lanfrank Übersetzungen 11,1 (Würzburg: Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, 1978), pp. 56-7.
- 50 W. L. Braekman, ed., *Medische en technische middelnederlandse recepten* (Ghent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1975).
- 51 Braekman, ed., 'Middelnederlandse gezondheidsleer', lines 80-4.
- 52 That is, a medical-pharmaceutic textbook in which all simple ingredients (*simplicia*), usually herbs but also minerals and animal substances, are described and discussed. The *Circa instans*, named after the opening words of the text, was extremely influential and remained in use until the late Middle Ages.
- 53 L. J. Vandewiele, ed., *Een middelnederlandse versie van de Circa Instans van*

- Platearius* [sic] naar de hss. *Portland, British Museum MS Loan 29/332* (xive eeuw) en *Universiteitsbibliotheek te Gent Hs. 1457* (xve eeuw) (Oudenaarde: Sanderus, 1970), p. 257.
- 54 Bartholomeus Engelsman, *Dat boeck van den proprieteyten der dinghen* (Haarlem: Jacob Bellaert, 1485). The original, thirteenth-century Latin text was translated into English by John Trevisa in the fourteenth century and printed by Wynkyn the Worde about 1485. For an edition based on the Middle English manuscript material, see M. C. Seymour, gen. ed., *On the Properties of Things*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975–88).
 - 55 In the case of a too abundant menstruation, one should bake an omelette with pennyroyal (Ph. Blommaert, *Der vrouwen heimelykheid*. Maetschappy der Vlaemsche Bibliophilen (Ghent: 1845), lines 1665–6). Conversely, if menstruation fails to occur, one is advised to eat onions, mustard, pepper, garlic and scaly fish and to drink ‘good and strong wine’ (1390–5). A pregnant woman should avoid ‘Azijn Sult dat zijn ossen voeten, pensen oft ander vleys dat inden azijn leyt. Melc, concommers, omdat si vercouwen so soudē sy bede perikel daer af krijgen Camyn ende Safranum scaden der vruchten . . . Ayun, latuwe, dille scaden der vrucht . . . Honich ende aleum . . . Basilicum, alsem, sout, peper scaden der vrucht want daer af salt droge en dorre worden in zijn vleys. . .’ (Vinegar, brawn of ox leg, tripe or other pickled meat. Milk, cucumber because they are ‘cold’ which might cause her harm, cummin and saffron damage the foetus, as do onions, lettuce, dill. Honey and garlic, basil, wormwood, salt, pepper damage the foetus because they will make its flesh dry and withered); after this one is advised against eating all sorts of meat, cheese, etc. (*Der vrouwen Natuere ende complexie* . . . (Utrecht: Jan van Doesborch, 1531)).
 - 56 I consider MS Ghent, UB, 1035, ed. Serrure (see below, n. 57) to belong to the sixteenth century.
 - 57 MS Antwerp, SB, Cod. 240 (*Repertorium* A 670); MS Ghent, UB, 1035 (*Repertorium* G 310), in A. Serrure, ed., *Keukenboek uitgegeven naar een handschrift der vijftiende [?] eeuw*. Maetschappy der Vlaemsche Bibliophilen, X (Ghent, 1872). *Repertorium* = Ria Jansen-Sieben, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse Artes-literatuur* (Utrecht: HES, 1989).
 - 58 MS Brussels, KB, 2887 (*Repertorium* B 590); MS Ghent, KA, 15 (*Repertorium* G 40); MS London, BL, Sloane 345 (*Repertorium* L 930); MS Middelburg, ZB, 6353 (*Repertorium* M 150); private manuscript Garnier [no. 1] (*Repertorium* P 280).
 - 59 MS Ghent, UB, 476 (*Repertorium* G 230), in Ria Jansen-Sieben and Johanna Maria van Winter, eds., *De keuken van de late middeleeuwen. Een kookboek van de 16e eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1989); private MS Antwerp (*Repertorium* P 170), in Jan Lindemans, ed., ‘Een Antwerps receptenboekje van ca. 1575–1615’, *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie* (1960), 401–34.

- 60 Unique copy: Munich, BSB, 4.Rar.752. Modern edition: M. Nijhoff, ed., *Het eerste Nederlandsche gedrukte Kookboek* (Brussel, Thomas van der Noot, c. 1510), facsimile edition after the only copy known to exist, in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1925).
- 61 *Hier begint eenen nyeuwen Cooch Boeck: dye noyt gheprint en heeft gheweest* (Antwerp: Wed. H. Peetersen, 1560). Modern edition: Elly Cockx-Indestege, ed., *Eenen nyeuwen cooch boeck. Kookboek samengesteld door Gheeraert Vorselman en gedrukt te Antwerpen in 1560* (Wiesbaden: Guido Pressler, 1971).
- 62 See Cockx-Indestege, *Eene nyeuwen cooch boeck*, p. 34.
- 63 *Eenen seer schoonen, ende excellenten Coc-boeck, inhoudende alderleye wel geexperimenteerde cokagien, van gebraedt, ghesoden, Pasteyen, Taerten, Toerten, Vlaeyen, Saussen, Sopen, ende diergelijcke: Ooc diversche Confeyturen ende Drancken, etc.* (Dordrecht: Jan Canin, 1593).
- 64 In 1599, in Delft, at Bruyn Harmansz. Schinckel.
- 65 Bruno Laurioux, Paris, wishes to make a temporary reservation for the French tradition (letter dated 21 March, 1988). However, he cannot avoid observing that out of sixty-five French manuscripts containing culinary recipes, forty-five are medical codices: 'Entre savoir et pratiques: le livre de cuisine à la fin du moyen âge', *Médiévales* 14 (1988), 59-71.
- 66 Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, p. 52.
- 67 Johanna Maria van Winter, *Van Soeter Cokene. Recepten uit de Romeinse en middeleeuwse keuken* (Bussum: Grolsche Bierbrouwerij, 1971), pp. 19-20.
- 68 J. Lestocquoy, 'Epices, médecine et abbayes', in *Etudes Mérovingiennes. Actes des Journées de Poitiers. 1er-3 mai 1952* (Paris, 1953), pp. 181-2.
- 69 Ehlert, 'Wissensvermittlung', pp. 137-59.

PART VII

Drama

CHAPTER 16

The drama texts in the Van Hulthem manuscript

H. van Dijk

Ten plays, preserved in one and the same manuscript: that is about all that has survived of Middle Dutch secular drama. Four of these are serious, so-called *abele spelen*,¹ the other six are *sotternieën* (farces).² In the manuscript they are presented in pairs; every *abel spel* is followed by a farce: *Esmoreit* and *Lippijn*, *Gloriant* and *Die buskenblaser*, *Lanseloet* and *Die hexe*, *Winter ende Somer* and *Rubben*. The two remaining farces, *Drie daghe here* and *Truwanten*, make up the fifth pair.

The contents of the four *abele spelen* may be briefly summarized as follows. In the first *Esmoreit* is crown prince of Sicily. As a baby he is abducted by his evil cousin and sold to the king of Damast. Years later he is told by the heathen princess Damiët, who has brought him up and who is in love with him, that he is a foundling. In pursuit of his parents he is recognized by his mother on Sicily. *Esmoreit* becomes king of Sicily and marries Damiët, while the treacherous cousin is hanged. The protagonist of the second *abel spel*, *Gloriant*, thinks no woman in the world to be worthy of him, but in spite of that he falls in love, after he has been shown a picture of her, with the Saracen princess Florentijn of Abelant. Having overcome many inward and outward obstacles he eventually succeeds in marrying Florentijn. In the third play *Lanseloet*, the crown prince of Denmark, falls in love with the fair Sanderijn, one of his mother's ladies-in-waiting. However, the queen is opposed to her son's making a morganatic marriage. She sees to it that for one night *Lanseloet* has Sanderijn at his disposal and that after that he repudiates her. The deceived girl sadly leaves the Danish court and in the end marries a knight in a distant country. *Lanseloet*, heart-broken, dies of grief. *Winter ende Somer*, the fourth *abel spel*, is of an allegorical nature. At the centre of this play is the age-old question of which season is more important to mankind. Finally, the subject

matter of the six *sotterniën* is typical of the farce; the majority is about the struggle between husband and wife.

It is not possible to date the plays with any precision, but the second half of the fourteenth century is certainly not too early. Consequently the four *abele spelen* in particular must be considered to make up a very special group in the history of drama. G. P. M. Knuvelder calls them 'the oldest secular drama of a serious nature ... known to West European literature'.³ In this essay it is my intention to discuss the question of what it is that makes the *abele spelen* and *sotterniën* a group. Did fourteenth-century people see them as a special group or is the idea of a corpus a mere coincidence, resulting from the paucity of the material? For the plays are the only ones of their kind known to us, and have come down in the same manuscript at that. These two circumstances – the plays in the context of the history of drama and the imperfect tradition – will be considered first. After some insight has been gained in these areas an attempt will be made to characterize the corpus.

THE HULTHEM PLAYS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORY OF DRAMA

Among the medieval plays that we have, the *abele spelen* do indeed constitute a special group. They are not part of a widely disseminated genre, nor can any development be identified from which they have resulted. And yet it is hard to believe that the plays were created *ex nihilo*. I assume that a tradition did exist, but has for the greater part been lost.

A first sign of this is the one scrap of worldly drama in Middle Dutch that remains outside the Van Hulthem manuscript. It concerns a short fragment (180 lines) of a summer-and-winter play,⁴ written down about 1436, with the same subject as in the *abel spel* of that name. Both pieces are early, Dutch representatives of a genre mainly known from Germany, the seasonal play, the oldest versions of which go back to the fourteenth century.⁵ On comparison the similarity of the Dutch and German texts turns out to be more than merely thematic; there are also striking parallels in the elaboration of the theme. Consequently the play of *Winter ende Somer*, as to theme and content, actually fits in a tradition, which has been preserved in other languages apart from Middle Dutch. At the same time it should be remarked that *Winter ende Somer* occupies a special position

in the tradition of the seasonal play because the well-known theme, after a conventional opening, is handled in a highly idiosyncratic manner.⁶ For the very same reason, and because of its allegorical form, *Winter ende Somer* is the odd man out in the group of the *abele spelen*.

There are more indications to support the assumption that there was a tradition of Middle Dutch secular drama. From records mentioning theatrical performances it can be deduced that plays must have existed which in a number of ways resembled the *abele spelen*. It is known, for instance, that in 1444, in the east Flemish city of Deinze, *Tspel van den wijghe van Ronchevale* (*The Play of the Battle of Roncevaux*) was performed and in 1483 the *Spel van Florijsse ende van Blanchefloere*.⁷ The texts have not been preserved but the titles show that we are dealing with dramatized romances, and as regards content that is quite close to the three 'romance' *abele spelen*: *Esmoreit*, *Gloriant* and *Lanseloet*. In themselves these *abele spelen* are not dramatizations of specific romances, but in their subject matter, their themes and in the naming of the characters they certainly go back to the romance genre.⁸ If plays of a secular, chivalric subject matter existed in the fifteenth century, they could very well have existed in the fourteenth century; in that case they could have helped in shaping a tradition of which the *abele spelen* are part as well.

And of course there are the *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*,⁹ forty French miracle plays of the fourteenth century, which were performed – one at a time – during the great annual assembly of the *Confrérie* of the goldsmiths, 'Saint Eloy', in Paris.¹⁰ In many cases the content of these pieces has been derived from well-known miracle texts about Mary, but also from different sources, such as saints' lives and romances. The connecting link in all plays is that a sinner is saved by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Virgin. As a result the tenor of these plays is basically religious, which makes them come under the genre of spiritual drama. And yet the content is often primarily secular. Numerous motifs correspond with motifs in the *abele spelen*: the wrongfully repudiated, but later rehabilitated, noble lady (the eponymous lady in *Gaudine*; cf. *Esmoreit*), the pressure exerted by councillors on a prince to marry (*La fille du roi de Hongrie*; cf. *Gloriant*), the young girl roaming in the woods (*Berthe*; cp. *Lanseloet*). These parallels were pointed out as early as 1903 by J. A. Worp¹¹ and they cannot be denied. Some *Miracles* are set in the same chivalric entourage as the *abele spelen*; they share countless

narrative elements because they take their subject matter from the same kind of sources: the romances. Nevertheless the differences are considerable. Most important of these, in my view, is the divergence in tenor. Mary may frequently be a somewhat implausible *dea ex machina* one could easily do without, yet time and again her appearance is the effectuation of the primary message of the *Miracles*: sincere prayer to Mary is never in vain. And even if Sanderijn experiences the truth of this when in her despair she prays to the 'Moeder ende Maget vri, / Fonteine alder suverheit' (Mother and noble virgin, spring of all purity; *Lanseloet*, 354-5), the tenor of the *abele spelen* is anything but spiritual.

In other words, we do have, in the history of drama, a context in which these *abele spelen* fit. But their remains and traces are partly from a later period, and continuously point to a *partial* correspondence; in no place is an exact correspondence found. Of course it is difficult to form an opinion because of the defective tradition. It is not known, for instance, if there were more *abele spelen*, and if it had any subgenres (e.g. more romance-like, or more allegorical, like *Winter ende Somer*). At any rate, from the above it appears that the *abele spelen* can be linked up with other medieval, and even Middle Dutch, drama, but that they are nevertheless unique as the sole surviving plays of their kind. That is why they are of such importance to the history of drama.

THE VAN HULTHEM MANUSCRIPT

The Van Hulthem manuscript,¹² named after the owner who had it in his possession from 1811 to 1832, is one of the most important sources of medieval Dutch literature. It is a paper manuscript, containing 210 texts in Middle Dutch of a wide variety of genres and from many different periods,¹³ but the ten plays at the end have from the outset drawn most of the scholars' attention. All the texts in the manuscript have been numbered and provided with a title at the beginning, while at the end of each text the number of lines is given. From this systematic arrangement information can be derived about the compilation of the texts in the codex and about the relations between the texts. That the plays were meant to be presented in pairs, for instance, is shown by the titles: *Een abel spel van Esmoreit, tconinx sone van Cecilien, ende ene sotternie daer na volghende* (*An 'abel' play about Esmoreit, the son of the king of Sicily, and a farce, following upon that*).

This first pair, numbered 169 and 170, is on fols. 170–80. They are followed by thirty-four on the whole very short texts, after which, on fols. 213–23, we find the second pair, *Gloriant* and *Die buskenblaser*, together under one number, 205. On fols. 223–30 it is immediately followed by the next pair, *Lanseloet* and *Die hexe*, also under one number, 206. On fols. 231–5 we find the two *sotternieën* *Drie daghe here* and *Truwanten*, numbered 209 and 210, in turn followed, on fols. 235–41, by *Winter ende Somer* and *Rubben*, under number 211. As it appears, the ten pieces do not make up an uninterrupted series. The first break, as we saw, is quite long; the second, after *Lanseloet* and *Die hexe*, is short and contains only two texts. One of these is clearly related to the drama texts. It is a so-called *passe-partout* monologue (fifty-two lines) with the title *Een beginsel van alle spelen* (*An Opening for All Plays*).¹⁴ As a prologue it fits any drama text because the contents are quite general, but it might also have been said as an extra opening before the specific prologue of another play. This *Beginsel* makes the eleventh drama text in the Van Hulthem manuscript.

Of all drama texts, with the exception of *Lanseloet*,¹⁵ the Van Hulthem manuscript is the only source. Consequently this manuscript is the starting-point of all research into the plays. The watermarks show that it was written in the first decade of the fifteenth century.¹⁶ The dialect of a number of the texts, as well as some internal evidence, indicate that this could have been done in Brabant (possibly in Brussels).¹⁷ Who might have compiled this enormous collection of texts, of such divergent origin, and to what end? The codex has been produced in a neat but modest fashion. Because of this, but especially because of the presence of the drama texts, it was at first thought that an itinerant company of actors might have commissioned it, or an individual *sprookspreker* (teller of tales), or an early chamber of rhetoric.¹⁸ In all these hypotheses the contents of the entire codex are seen as the repertoire of storytellers and actors, and this, considering the nature of many of the texts, seems highly implausible. A more recent hypothesis concerning the function of the manuscript is based on the specification of the number of lines at the end of every text.¹⁹ The explanation of that could be that the manuscript was compiled as the standard collection of a scriptorium. The line totals would then help to calculate quickly the size of a text and the costs of copying it.

If the drama texts are considered in the light of this hypothesis,²⁰ one cannot but notice that irregularities occur exactly where, at the

end of the plays, the line totals are given. For instance, at the end of *Die buskenblaser* the total is found after the last cue. By all appearances the farce would seem to be finished, but then a four-line epilogue follows:

Ghi goede liede, dit spel es ghedaen
 Ghi mocht wel alle thuus weert gaen
 Ende lopen alle den graet neder.
 Ghenoeghet u, comt alle weder. (205-8)

(Dear people, this play is finished; you may all go home and all go down the stairs. If you like it, come back all.)

This short text is of a general nature; in no way does it refer to the contents of the farce and as such it resembles the *Beginsel van alle spelen*, found in the manuscript as an independent item (a *passe-partout* prologue). This isolated epilogue looks like an afterthought, added for the purpose of a specific presentation. Similar additions can be found at other places in the plays, always as a prologue or as an epilogue, or at the links between the *abele spelen* and the farces. In all these places the audience is addressed directly, and the interpolations are without exception connected with the staging of the plays. It seems unlikely that the copyist or the compiler are responsible for these alterations; they rather appear to be the work of someone involved with the production: an adapter-director. Hence the origin of the interpolations should be looked for in the textual history of the plays *before* they were included in the Van Hulthem manuscript. In my opinion they may have been used by the director of a company of actors and at that stage been revised. If this assumption is correct the texts are indeed connected with a company's repertoire, though not in the sense that the Van Hulthem manuscript itself was used during the production of the plays.

On the basis of the above the proposition can safely be advanced that a number of the most conspicuous parallels between the plays, viz. those concerning the prologues, the epilogues and the links, are of a secondary nature. Although it is true that these parallels in particular add greatly to the impression that the plays are a coherent group, from what follows it will appear that the parallels are not restricted to these secondary passages.

Now that such external factors as the chance preservation and the history of the texts have been discussed, attention can be paid to the

original, internal parallels. I will first consider six aspects which together largely determine our idea of the drama in the Van Hulthem manuscript.

RHYME AND VERSIFICATION

The rhyme structure of the *abele spelen* and farces is extremely simple. There are no complex rhyme schemes or verse forms, and even dialogues with rapid alternations between the actors do not occur. All the plays are entirely in rhymed couplets, and all the cues consist of complete lines. The 'quiet' impression this makes is reinforced by the virtual absence of iambs. The versification is rather 'static', that is, syntactic structure and poetic structure usually coincide.²¹

The cues are linked by means of rhyming couplets; in other words, the last line of a cue rhymes with the first line of the next. The concatenation of the cues prevents the dialogue becoming too stiff and formal and in addition functions as a prompt for the actors. Consequently the link would be superfluous when the stage is empty for a moment or the dialogue is interrupted for silent action.²² At these places in the text there is an intentional break in the chain of rhyming cues. An example from *Die buskenblaser*: when the poor duffer's wife and neighbour tell him that after his rejuvenation cure he is not young and handsome but old and dirty, he asks for a mirror:

Latet mi doch sien in enen spiegel claer,
 Dat ic mi selven mach anesien.
Sijn wijf
 En trouwen, dat sal u ghescien.
Die ierste man, haer man
 Hulpe, hulpe, goede lie!
 Des wonders ghelijc en sach ic nie (134-8)

('Let me see it in a clear mirror, so that I can look at myself'. *His wife*: 'Certainly, I'll do that for you'. *First man, her husband*: 'Help, help, dear people! I've never seen anything as strange as this before.')

After line 136 the woman goes to fetch a mirror and shows it to her husband, which in this context provides ample opportunity for silent action. At this point in the text the rhyme connection is interrupted; the effect of the rhyme words would be nil here. Breaks of this kind occur in all of the *abele spelen*, and in most of the farces as well.

MONOLOGUES

G. Stuiveling deserves the credit for having pointed out a prominent function of some of the monologues in the three romance plays.²³ These *autonomous* monologues, as he has called them, mark a transition in the action and contain a prayer in the middle. A good example is Sanderijn's monologue, spoken immediately after the lovesick Lanseloet has repudiated her (322–65). She begins by complaining about Lanseloet's behaviour and about the mean trick his mother played on her. She resolutely decides to leave the Danish court: 'Lanseloet, ghi en siet mi nemmermee: / Ic wille gaen dolen in dit forest' ('Lanseloet, you'll never see me again; I'll roam about in this forest'; *Lanseloet*, 346–7). After that she prays for help (348–59), to Mary in particular, the 'Fonteine alder suverheit' (Fountain of purity), and then she sees a brooklet (*fonteine*) in the scenery around her (360–5). From what follows it appears that during her monologue she has travelled from Denmark to the far-off land where the foreign knight will find her a little later. Thus the monologue signifies a change in place, time and action. Apart from in the three romance plays, such transitional monologues occur in *Winter ende Somer* (408–37) and even in the *sotternieën*, though they are there on a much smaller scale, while the prayer has been reduced to a minimum or disappeared completely. In the transitional monologue of the maidservant in *Truwanten* it has become an exclamation: 'Nu hulpt, God, diet al verleent!' ('Help, God, who gives it all!'; 127).

THE SCENE OF THE ACTION

The transitional monologues are closely connected to the scene of the action. The plays in the Van Hulthem manuscript show a marked preference for only two localities: Sesiliën and Damast in *Esmoreit*, Bruuyswijc and Abelant in *Gloriant*, Denmark and the 'far-off country' in *Lanseloet*. In these three plays the action alternates between the two places, and that alternation is so regular that Stuiveling could base an analysis of the structures of the three romance plays on it.²⁴ In most of the farces, too, there are only two scenes of action, which may be characterized as 'at home' and 'conventional' versus 'outside' and 'unconventional'. The *buskenblaser* meets the quack somewhere out of doors and then, in a very funny transitional monologue (97–103), hurries home, where he

shows his wife the results of his rejuvenation cure. In *Lippijn* the scene is laid at Lippijn's house and at a place outside, where his wife meets her lover. *Die hexe* is enacted at Machtelt's house and the witch Juliane's inn. In *Winter ende Somer* there is not so much a dichotomy of place; it is rather in the opposition between the two protagonists, Winter and Summer.

Practically all of the plays, then, show a notable dichotomy, usually in the shape of two scenes of action. To establish contact between the various places the characters travel. In quite a few instances the shift is signalled by means of transitional monologues, but occasionally the action changes without any verbal indication. These highly uncomplicated structural techniques confirm the impression obtained from the discussion of the rhymes and the versification: the plays have been put together with a very modest set of means, which, moreover, are the same for all the plays.

THE CHARACTERS

An inventory of the characters in the ten plays brings to light a clear division between the serious and the comical plays.²⁵ The *abele spelen* are set in the highest circles of the nobility, at the courts of princes. Also *Winter ende Somer*, in which the scene of action is not mentioned explicitly, consists in an altercation between 'tween heren hoghe geboren' (two high-born gentlemen; 441). By way of exception two non-noble characters appear: Venus, who is to pass judgement in the dispute between the two seasons and on that account has to be above party, and the *cockijn* (tramp), to whom it is made quite clear that he has no business with the powerful; as a comical counterpart of Venus he is *under* the parties. Apart from these two there is one more exception to the noble status of the characters in the *abele spelen*: the *warande huedere* (gardener) in *Lanseloet*. Just like the *cockijn* the *warande huedere* takes care of a comical intermezzo in the predominantly serious action. In this kind of drama 'common' people are ridiculous.

This is all the more true for the farces, in which exclusively 'common' people make their appearance. The viragoes and duffers, with their uncivilized behaviour, not only form a social contrast to the world of chivalry in the *abele spelen*, they also constitute a deterrent to the audience. Whoever behaves like that will fare badly and is ridiculous in the eyes of the powerful.

The dichotomy principle, pointed out in relation to the structure of the plays, also causes a division between the characters of each play – as was mentioned above with regard to *Winter ende Somer*. In this play the characters are grouped as vassals around the two contending princes/seasons. Venus and the *cockijn* fall outside this bipartite structure, but, considering the contents of the play, that is a functional device.

In the romance plays the dichotomy of the characters corresponds to the two scenes of the action. In *Esmoreit* the court of Sesiliën accommodates a king, a queen, a royal child (Esmoreit) and a courtier (Robberecht), that of Damast a king, a royal child (Damiët) and a courtier (Platus). Similar, more or less balanced, dichotomies can be perceived in the characters of *Gloriant* and *Lanseloet*. In this connection the contents of the plays may be seen as attempts to 'bridge' the distance between the two scenes of the action. Esmoreit, when he discovers in Damast that he is a foundling, must find his parents, and with that his identity, in Sesiliën; Gloriant must collect Florentijn in Abelant, and Lanseloet desperately and in vain tries to make Sanderijn return from the far-off country.

A review of the social positions of the characters reveals identical milieux for, on the one hand, the *abele spelen* (practically all noble) and, on the other, the farces (entirely common). Also the inter-relationships within each *abel spel* strongly resemble each other. They always fall into two groups, which, moreover, in the romance plays coincide with the two scenes of action.

SUBJECT MATTER

Beyond any doubt the most important thematic parallel shared by the *abele spelen* is that of love. In this respect also *Winter ende Somer* stands out from the others because the love theme is only of minor importance here. After all, in relation to the issue that is at stake – which season is the more important – love is just another criterion. It should be added that it turns out to be the decisive one (which is the reason why the goddess Venus is invited to settle the dispute), but in spite of that it remains a subsidiary element in a play that is really about something else.

In the three romance plays love does make the central theme; they are always about a couple: Esmoreit and Damiët, Gloriant and

Florentijn, Lanseloet and Sanderijn. A striking feature is that all the men are heirs to the throne in a Christian country and the three women live far away. Besides, love is in all cases tied up with the theme of the endangered dynasty. In *Esmoreit* it is threatened by the treason of Robberecht; this leads to the sale of the baby Esmoreit and eventually to love. In *Gloriant* the danger is in Gloriant's pride, which makes him think that no woman is good enough for him. In *Lanseloet* the dynasty is endangered by Lanseloet's wish to marry beneath his situation. Esmoreit and Gloriant succeed in obtaining both their kingdom and their love; Lanseloet dies because he cannot get Sanderijn, and because of this the kingdom loses its heir.

The thematic parallel between the *abele spelen*, and between the romance plays in particular, contributes greatly to the uniform character of the pieces. A similar parallel is shared by the farces. They are all, except for *Die hexe*, about dominance in marriage and thus fit into an age-old literary tradition of viragoes lording it over their doltish husbands.

STAGING

It is not known how the *abele spelen* and farces were produced. There are very few stage directions in the manuscript and that means that the practice of staging can only be reconstructed by combining internal data from the texts with external information about medieval theatrical performances. Where there is so much uncertainty one has to be extremely careful about pronouncing on matters of staging. I will restrict myself to some noticeable parallels.

In the discussion of the manuscript it was pointed out that the texts as we have them contain secondary elements betraying the hand of an adapter-director. Through his adaptations the plays were adjusted for performance in pairs in the order *abel spel* – farce, an order known from other sources as well. But from the circumstance that the plays were linked only in the process of adaptation it follows that at an earlier stage they probably existed, and were performed, independently of each other.

Modern productions of the *abele spelen* are usually realized on a stage divided into two by an imaginary line and a few prominent props. Such a division nicely matches the structure of the play with its conspicuous dichotomy; in addition to that it links up with the medieval tradition of simultaneous drama, known from the French

and Dutch mystery plays. But certainty in this is lacking. The same goes for practically all other aspects of staging. If one were to say, 'In the fourteenth century the *abele spelen* and farces were as a rule performed outside, and at times perhaps inside, by more or less professional actors before an urban audience', such a statement, though indicating the direction in which many contemporary scholars are moving, would still have to be proved.²⁶ However, it is highly plausible that the staging of the plays as we have them was to a large degree identical.

CONCLUSION

Can the plays in the Van Hulthem manuscript rightly be considered as a group? To this question a balanced but affirmative answer may be given. In the first place they are of course a group because they are the only drama in the manuscript. It is probable that, before they were included in the manuscript, they were on the repertoire of a fourteenth-century company of actors in Brabant, possibly professional, by whom they were staged in pairs.

From the discussion of a number of internal characteristics it also appears that they have much in common. The idiosyncrasies of rhyme and versification, the monologues, the scenes of action, the characters, the themes and the way in which they were staged, all these together constitute a network of correspondences, a dramatic register, which must have made these plays, in the eyes of a contemporary audience, a coherent group.

Naturally the possibility cannot be excluded that more of this kind of drama existed. For the farces this is almost certainly the case, for the *abele spelen* it is less likely. Still, there is some evidence for the existence of secular medieval drama which shows comparable features, but we never find exactly the same. However, even if more *abele spelen* should have existed, we shall have to make do with the representatives in the Van Hulthem manuscript. And this conclusion once more confirms the conspicuous position of these plays in the history of west European drama.

TRANSLATED BY ERIK KOOPER

NOTES

- 1 An excellent survey of the state of research is Elsa Strietman, 'The Low Countries', in E. Simon, ed., *The Theatre of Medieval Europe. New*

Research in early Drama (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), pp. 225–52.

The meaning of the word *abele*, related to Latin *habile* and French *abile*, is contested. It is used in the phrase *abel spel* in the titles written over the plays in the manuscripts, e.g. *Een abel spel vanden Winter ende vanden Somer. Ende ene sotternie na volghende* (An ‘abel spel’ of the Winter and the Summer, with a farce following). It has been suggested that *abel* here be interpreted as ‘serious’, in contrast with the comical farce, but this can be defended neither etymologically nor lexically. That is why most modern editors prefer the more neutral translation *schoon* (beautiful, excellent).

- 2 The standard edition still is P. Leendertz, *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1899–1907). See also L. van Kammen, ed., *De abele spelen* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak en Van Genneep, 1968). For a number of these plays English translations are available; see the Appendix.
- 3 G. P. M. Knuvelde, *Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde*, 5th edn, 4 vols. ('s-Hertogenbosch: Malmberg, 1970–6), vol. 1, p. 294.
- 4 *Tspel van den Somer ende van den Winter* (*The Play of the Summer and of the Winter*), in Leendertz, *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, pp. 436–41.
- 5 W. Liungman, *Der Kampf zwischen Sommer und Winter* (Helsinki: Academia scientiarum Fennica, 1941).
- 6 Cf. H. van Dijk, ‘Als ons die astrominen lesen. Over het abel spel Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer’, in A. M. J. van Buuren, H. van Dijk, O. S. H. Lie and F. P. van Oostrom, eds., *Tussentijds. Bundel studies aangeboden aan W. P. Gerritsen ter gelegenheid van zijn vijftigste verjaardag* (Utrecht: HES, 1985), pp. 56–70.
- 7 A. L. de Vlaminck, *Jaerboeken der aloude Kamer van Rhetorika, Het Roosjen, onder kenspreuk: Ghebloeit int wilde, te Thielt* (Ghent: H. Hoste, 1862), p. 15.
- 8 Leendertz, *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, pp. cxliv–vi.
- 9 G. Paris and U. Robert, eds., *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, 7 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1876–83 (vol. viii: F. Bonnardot, ‘Glossaire et Tables’, 1893)).
- 10 M. Olsen, ‘Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages’, in Fleming G. Andersen, Julia McGrew, Tom Pettitt and Reinhold Schröder, eds., *Popular Drama in Northern Europe in the Later Middle Ages* (Odense University Press, 1988), pp. 41–63.
- 11 J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van het drama en van het tooneel in Nederland*. 2 vols. (Groningen: Wolters, 1904–8), vol. i, pp. 75–80.
- 12 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 15.589–623. A codicological description of this ‘Night Watch of Dutch literature’ remains to be written. For the information provided in the text, see J. Deschamps, *Middelnederlandse handschriften uit Europese en Amerikaanse bibliotheken. Catalogus* (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1970), no. 43, pp. 131–6. See also W. van Anrooij and A. M. J. van Buuren, ‘s-Levens felheid in

- één band: het handschrift-Van Hulthem', in H. Pleij *et al.*, *Op belofte van profijt. Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 184-99, 385-91.
- 13 For a survey of its contents, see C. P. Serrure, 'Het groot-Hulthemsch handschrift', *Vaderlandsch museum voor Nederduitsche letterkunde, oudheid en geschiedenis* 3 (1859-60), 139-64. See also the Introduction of H. van Dijk, W. P. Gerritsen, Orlanda S. H. Lie and Dieuwke E. van der Poel, eds., *Klein kapitaal uit het handschrift-Van Hulthem* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992), pp. 9-20.
 - 14 P. Leendertz, *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, pp. 442-3.
 - 15 There is a considerable number of early printed editions of *Lanseloet*; see R. Roemans and H. van Assche, eds., *Een abel spel van Lanseloet* (Antwerp: De Nederlandse boekhandel, 1982). Moreover, from the former archive of the chamber of rhetoric 'De Fiolieren' at the village of 's-Gravenpolder two rolls with drama texts have emerged; see W. H. M. Hüskens and F. A. M. Schaars, eds., *Sandrijn en Lanslot* (Nijmegen and Grave: Alfa, 1985).
 - 16 P. Tack, 'Onderzoek naar den ouderdom van het Hulthemse handschrift', *Het boek* 2 (1913), 81-91.
 - 17 Van Anrooij and Van Buuren, 's-Levens felheid', pp. 190-2.
 - 18 A. de Maeyer and R. Roemans, eds., *Esmoreit. Eerste integrale reproductie van het handschrift* (Antwerp: De Vlijt, 1948), p. 16.
 - 19 *Van Sente Brandane* (Catalogue of an exhibition) (Utrecht: Instituut De Vooys, 1968), p. 26.
 - 20 For what follows, see more extensively H. van Dijk, 'Als ons die astrominen lesen', pp. 58-60.
 - 21 The terms 'quiet' and 'static' have been taken from E. van den Berg, *Middelnederlandse versbouw en syntaxis* (Utrecht: HES, 1983), pp. 118-23.
 - 22 G. Stuiveling, 'De structuur van de abele spelen', in *Vakwerk. Twaalf studies in literatuur* (Zwolle: Tjeenk willink, 1967), pp. 1-43.
 - 23 Ibid.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 For an inventory of the personal names in the plays, see A. Dabrowska, *Untersuchungen über die mittelniederländischen Abele Spelen (Herkunft-Stil-Motive)* (Warsaw: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1987), pp. 316-28.
 - 26 The most important contribution on the staging of the *abele spelen* is that of W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Tekst en toneelinrichting in de abele spelen', *De nieuwe taalgids* 70 (1977), 229-42. For the intended audience, see the article by Herman Pleij in this volume and also Orlanda S. H. Lie, 'Het abel spel van Lanseloet van Denemerken in het handschrift-Van Hulthem: hoofse tekst of stadsliteratuur?', in H. Pleij *et al.*, *Op belofte van profijt*, pp. 200-16.

APPENDIX A

Bibliography of translations

The bibliography that is presented below makes no claim to being exhaustive. On the other hand it does give an accurate impression of the state of affairs. Fortunately, over the past few years the number of translations has been increasing rapidly, and especially the journal *Dutch Crossing. A Journal of Low Countries Studies* (published by the Centre for Low Countries Studies, University College, London) ought to be applauded for its many contributions, not only in the field of Middle Dutch but in that of Dutch literature in general. For a survey of what is published annually on Middle Dutch literature, see the relevant section of Elsa Strietman's contribution to *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association).

Entries have been listed in alphabetical order per author and per title. Where more than one translation of the same work exists the order is chronological rather than strictly alphabetical.

A. M. J. VAN BUUREN AND ERIK KOOPER

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- Walewein*. See *Roges' Story*

APPENDIX B

Medieval Dutch literature in its European context: 1150–1500 Chronological table

On the following pages a (selective) outline of the Dutch history and literature in the period 1150–1500 is presented in two central columns. The European background is offered in flanking chronological tables: history on the left, literature on the right. For convenience of arrangement the material has been divided into periods of fifty years each, headed by the names of one or two leading authors of the period concerned.

The reader should be aware of the following limitations. As neither date nor provenance are certain for the majority of the Middle Dutch texts it is a difficult and hazardous task to subsume them in a chronological table. Therefore, most dates concerning Middle Dutch literature are approximate (in some cases even the age to which a work belongs is not certain). If we lack specific indications dates are abandoned to avoid a semblance of accuracy. Translations have been provided for those Dutch titles that are not self-explanatory or clear from the context in which they are given.

The column on 'European literatures' is, of course, highly selective. This restricted choice of milestones is only meant to function as a framework of reference. In addition to these usually widely known and highly influential works a few others have been included that have exerted a specific influence on Middle Dutch literature.

I should like to express my gratitude to Professor W. P. Gerritsen who most generously put at my disposal the basic material from which this survey is drawn. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for any inaccuracies that may be found in it.

ERWIN MANTINGH

1150–1200 *The age of Veldeke*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Alexander III (1159–81).

German Empire: Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90); Henry VI (1190–7), also king of Sicily.

France: Louis VII (1137–80); Philip II Augustus (1180–1223).

England: Henry II (1154–89); Richard Lionheart (1189–99).

- 1152 Eleanor, heiress of Aquitaine, Gascony and Poitou, divorces Louis VII and marries Henry of Anjou, heir to the English throne and ruler of Anjou, Maine and Normandy.
- 1155 Frederick I Barbarossa crowned emperor.
- 1170 Thomas Becket murdered.
- 1173 Canonization of Thomas Becket by Alexander III. Canterbury becomes an important place of pilgrimage.
- 1176 Peter Valdès founds a heretic sect (the later Waldensians) in Lyon.
- 1185 Treaty of Boves. Philip II Augustus increases his royal territory at the expense of Philip of Alsace, count of Flanders.
- 1187 Jerusalem recaptured by Sultan Saladin.
- 1189–92 Third Crusade under Frederick I Barbarossa, Philip II Augustus and Richard Lionheart.
- 1191 Conquest of Acre.
- 1194 Henry VI, king of Germany, conquers Sicily.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Diederik of Alsace (1128–68); Philip of Alsace (1168–91); Baldwin VIII (1191–4; married to Margaret, sister of Philip); Baldwin IX (1194–1205).

As a fief of the French crown, the county of Flanders is linked politically and culturally with France, whereas economically it relies on England. In this period French-speaking Arras is the centre of administration, where Philip of Alsace patronizes many French poets. He is counsellor of the young king of France Philip II Augustus, who marries the count's niece Isabella. In Flanders the counts are able to increase their authority over the powerful nobility owing to the support of the towns; in exchange the towns get juridical and economic privileges. Economically the towns depend on the English wool. The wool supply is controlled by the kings of England, adversaries of the Flemish count.

Brabant: Geoffrey III (1142–90); Henry I (1190–1235). Brabant is a part of the Holy Roman Empire. The policy of the dukes is concentrated on expanding their power in two directions: eastward, to control towns like Maastricht and Aachen along the overland trade route between Cologne and the North Sea, and northward, where c. 1185 the town of 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) is founded.

Utrecht: The bishops of Utrecht exercise worldly power over two areas: the *Oversticht* (more or less covering the modern Provinces of Overijssel, Drenthe and Groningen) and the *Nedersticht* (= Province of Utrecht). Bishops are elected by the canons of the city's five chapters, but in practice the neighbouring rulers are very influential.

Holland: Florens III (1157–90); Dirk VIII (1190–1203).

Originally a modest county, Holland successfully increases its territory in the areas of the Great Rivers (Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt) and the islands of Zeeland. In 1179 the counts of Holland obtain the toll at the estuary of the Great Rivers. The monastery of Egmond is the cultural centre of Holland. Great waterworks are carried out in this period: dyking and draining of the vast marshland between the town of Utrecht and the dunes along the North Sea coast.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

HENDRIK VAN VELDEKE

c. 1170 *Leven van Sint Servaes*, translation of the Latin *vita* of the Maastricht Bishop Servaes (fourth century).

Veldeke also wrote the *Roman d'Eneas* adaptation *Eneide* and c. 25 lyrical poems, transmitted exclusively in German manuscripts.

The following works, all surviving in later sources, probably date back to this period:

De reis van Sint Brandaan originates from the Rhineland but was presumably translated early in a more western dialect.

Limburg version of the Old French *Chanson d'Aiol* (fragmentary).

Van den bere Wisselau (*About Wisselau the Bear*; fragm.), mixes features of Charlemagne romance with characteristics of Germanic heroic poetry.

So-called 'Trier *Floyris*' (fragm.), first adaptation of *Floire et Blancheflor*.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

JOHN OF SALISBURY (d. 1180), *Policraticus*.

ALANUS DE INSULIS: *De planctu Naturae* (c. 1160–5), *Anticlaudianus* (c. 1180–5).

GAUTIER DE CHATILLON: *Alexandreis* (c. 1180).
Magister NIVARDUS: *Ysengrimus* (Ghent, c. 1150).

ANDREAS CAPELLANUS: *De arte honeste amandi*.

ARCHIPOETA: lyrical poetry (c. 1160).

Occitan literature:

Troubadours, e.g. BERNARD DE VENTADORN.

Old French literature:

Dozens of *chansons de geste* including *Chanson d'Aiol*, *Girart de Vienne* (BERTRAND DE BAR-SUR-AUBE; c. 1200).

WACE: *Roman de Brut* (1155).

Classical romances:

Roman de Thèbes (c. 1160).

Roman d'Eneas (c. 1160).

BENOIT DE SAINT-MAURE, *Roman de Troie* (c. 1165).

Arthurian romances:

CHRETIEN DE TROYES (c. 1160–90).

BEROUL and THOMAS: *Tristan-romances*.

Oriental romance: *Floire et Blancheflor* (c. 1160–70).

MARIE DE FRANCE (c. 1170–80): *Lais*, *Fables*.

JEAN BODEL (member of the Puy d'Arras), *La Chanson des Saisnes* (c. 1195) and *Le Miracle de Saint Nicolas* (c. 1200).

Beast epic: oldest branches of the *Roman de Renart* (by PIERRE DE SAINT-CLOUD and others).

Drama: *Jeu d'Adam* (c. 1150).

German literature:

HARTMANN VON AUE (c. 1180–1200), *Erec*, *Iwein*, *Gregorius*.

1200–1250 *The age of Segher Diengotgaf and Hadewijch*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Innocent III (1198–1216); Gregory IX (1227–41).

German Empire: Guelphs (*Welfen*) and Ghibellines (*Staufen*) dispute the succession to the throne (1198–1212); Frederick II (1212–50), simultaneously king of Sicily.

France: Philip II Augustus (1180–1223); Louis VIII (1223–6); (St.) Louis IX (1226–70).

England: John I (1199–1216); Henry III (1216–72).

1202–4 Fourth Crusade. Conquest of Constantinople and establishment of Latin Empire (until 1261).

1209–29 Albigensian Crusades. Cathar heretics persecuted in southern France.

1212 Children's Crusade.

1214 Battle of Bouvines. Philip II Augustus defeats Otto IV, the Guelph rival for the German throne, despite his alliance with England.

1215 Fourth Lateran Council decides to prosecute heretics (inquisition) and to levy taxes to finance crusades.

In England royal power is restricted by *Magna Charta*.

1216 Dominic founds his mendicant Order of Preachers.

1226 The Order of the Friars Minor experiences an explosive growth after the death of Francis of Assisi.

1228–9 Fifth Crusade, under Frederick II. Conquest of Jerusalem.

1232 Dominicans are charged with the inquisition.

1241 The Mongol invasion (of Russia, Poland, Hungary) comes to a halt due to the death of the Great Kahn Ogodai.

1244 Jerusalem falls to the Muslim Sultan of Egypt and is beyond retrieval for the Christians.

1248–54 Sixth Crusade. Louis IX is defeated and captured near Cairo. He returns via Acre.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Baldwin IX (1194–1205), Emperor of the Latin Empire from the year 1204 until the time of his death; his daughter and successor Joanna of Flanders (1205–44) is spoonfed by Philip II Augustus, who gives her in marriage to Ferrand of Portugal; Margaret (1244–78), sister of Joanna.

Brabant: Henry I (1190–1235); Henry II (1235–48); Henry III (1248–61).

Utrecht: Bishop Otto von Lippe (1215–27) is killed near Ane (Drenthe) in an effort to maintain authority in the northern regions of his secular sphere of influence.

Holland: Dirk VII (1190–1203); William I (1203–22); Florens IV (1222–34); William II (1234–56), 'Roman king' from 1247.

1182–1246 Lutgart of Tongres, mystic and saint. Particularly in the diocese of Liège numerous convents come into being that are admitted to the Order of Citeaux. The rise of dozens of beguinages is another new religious phenomenon in the Low Countries.

1202–4 Brabant acquires rights over the imperial town Maastricht and maintains its influence in the region of the rivers Rhine and Meuse by waging war on Holland and Guelders.

1214 William I of Holland and Ferrand of Flanders, both fighting on the English side, captured by the French at Bouvines. At the last moment Henry I, duke of Brabant, goes over to the side of Frederick II and Philip II Augustus.

1216 William I of Holland excommunicated because of his taking part in the expedition against the English king John I.

1219 William I distinguishes himself for courage in the siege of Damietta (Egypt), which results in the release of his ban.

1230 Utrecht citizens obtain influence in the town government.

1244 The marriage of Countess Margaret of Flanders and Bouchard of Avesnes is dissolved; Margaret marries William of Dampierre. The Avesnes-faction confederates with Holland against the Dampierres.

1247 William II of Holland is elected 'Roman King' (i.e. antiking beside Frederick II), but not until his uncle Henry II of Brabant had declined the honour. Count Otto II of Guelders is granted the imperial town of Nijmegen in fief.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

Charlemagne romances:

Karel ende Elegast, the only Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance preserved in its entirety.

Roelantslied (fragm.; adaptation of the *Chanson de Roland*).

Renout van Montalbaen (fragm.; adapted from *Renaut de Montauban*).

Short fragments remain of (among others): *Willem van Oringen*, *Gheraert van Viane*, *Hughe van Bordes*, the Flemish *Aiol* (a second translation of the *Chanson d'Aiol*).

Classical romances:

SEGHER DIENGOTGAF, *Troy Romance*. The work consists of one original episode, *Tpriel van Troyen* (*The Troy Arbour*), and two adapted from the Old French *Roman de Troie*: *Tpaerlement van Troyen* and *Die grote strijt* (*The Great War*).

Arthurian romances:

Tristan (Low Frankish fragm., based on Thomas' *Tristan*)

Percheval (fragm.; translation of Chrétien's *Perceval*)

Die urake van Ragisel (fragm.; based on the *Vengeance de Raguidel*)

Lantsloot vander Haghedochte (fragm.; verse adaptation of the *Lancelot en prose*)

PENNING and PIETER VOSTAERT: *Walewein Moriaen*

Die ridder metter mouwen (*The Knight with the Sleeves*)

Ferguut (adaptation of *Fergus*)

Oriental romance:

Parthenopeus van Blois

Didactic literature:

Boec van Catoene (*Dietsche Catoen*), translation of the *Disticha Catonis*

Boec van seden (*The Book of Morals*)

CALSTAF and NOYDEKIN: *Esopet* (fables of Aesop)

Lyric:

'Lund songs' (love poems)

Biblical epic:

Van den levene ons Heren (verse life of Christ)

Mystical literature:

HADEWIJCH: *Strofische gedichten* (poems in stanzas), *Mengeldichten* (miscellaneous poems), *Visioenen* (visions) en *Brieven* (letters).

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

THOMAS CANTIMPRATENSIS, *De naturis rerum* (c. 1240), *Vita Lutgardis* (after 1248).

JACQUES DE VITRY (d. 1240), *Historia Orientalis*.

ROBERT GROSSETESTE (d. 1253), translates Aristotle's *Ethics* into Latin.

BARTHOLOMEUS ANGLICUS, *De proprietatibus rerum* (a. 1250).

Old French literature:

Chansons de geste, including *Maugis d'Aigremont*.

Arthurian verse romances:

GUILLAUME LI CLERS, *Fergus* (c. 1230).

Four Continuations of Chrétien's *Perceval* (MA-NESSIER, GERBERT DE MONTREUIL): the development of narrative cycles.

ROBERT DE BORON, *Joseph d'Arimathie* (c. 1200) (christianization of the Grail theme); *Merlin* (c. 1210); both works will later be rewritten in prose.

Arthurian prose romances: creation of the immense *Lancelot en prose*, afterwards enlarged to the *Vulgate Cycle Lancelot-Queste del Saint Graal-La Mort le Roi Artu* (c. 1220-35). *Tristan en prose* (c. 1225-50).

Allegorical romance: GUILLAUME DE LORRIS, *Le Roman de la Rose* (c. 1235), left unfinished.

Drama: *Aucassin et Nicolette* (c. 1200; chanted).

Lyric: *Trouvères*. THIBAUT DE CHAMPAGNE (d. 1253) and others.

German literature: the hey-day of courtly poetry.

Romance:

WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH, *Parzival* (c. 1200-10), *Titurel* (a. 1219).

GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG, *Tristan* (c. 1210).

Lyric: *Minnesänger*, e.g. WALTER VON DER VOGELWEIDE (d. c. 1230), HEINRICH VON MORUNGEN (d. 1222).

English literature:

LA3AMON, *The Brut* (c. 1200).

1250–1300 *The age of Maerlant*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Alexander IV (1254–61); Nicolas III (1277–80); Boniface VIII (1294–1303).
German Empire: Conrad IV (1250–4); William II, Count of Holland, antiking (1247–56); various weak kings until Rudolf I of Habsburg (1273–91).
France: (St.) Louis IX (1226–70); Philip III (1270–85); Philip IV (the Fair) (1285–1314).
England: Henry III (1216–72); Edward I (1272–1307).

- 1252 German merchants receive special privileges in Bruges.
- 1252–5 The Flemish dominican William of Rubroeck travels through Central Asia.
- 1256 Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX, obtains Naples and Sicily from Pope Alexander IV.
- 1258 Extension of the powers of the English parliament.
Baghdad, centre of the Muslim world, conquered by Mongols.
- 1259 Treaty of Paris between Henry III of England and Louis IX of France: Henry drops his claims on Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Touraine and Poitou, but keeps Gascony.
- 1270 Seventh Crusade, under Louis IX, is a failure. Louis IX dies near Tunis.
- 1271–91 Travels of Marco Polo to South-East Asia and China.
- 1274 Council of Lyon. Michael Paleologue, Emperor of Byzantium, acknowledges the primacy of Rome in exchange for military support against the Turks: end of the Western Schism (only until 1281).
- 1280 In London German merchants unite in the Hanseatic League.
- 1282 'Sicilian Vespers': due to a revolt against the French Charles of Anjou is expelled from Sicily.
- 1283 The conquest of Prussia by the Knights of the Teutonic Order is completed.
- 1289 The franciscan missionary John of Monte Corvino makes countless converts in China. He dies as archbishop of Peking.
- 1290 Jews expelled from England.
- 1291 Fall of Acre to Muslims.
- 1294–7 War between Edward I of England and Philip IV of France over Gascony.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Margaret (1244–78); Guy of Dampierre (1278–1305).
Brabant: Henry III (1248–61); John I (1267–94); John II (1294–1312).
Holland: William II (1234–56); Florens V (1266–96); John I (1296–9); John II of Avesnes (1299–1304).
Utrecht: Henry I of Vianden (1250–67); John I of Nassau (1267–90).
Guelders: Otto II (1229–71); Reinoud I (1271–1326).

- 1256 William II of Holland is killed in a battle with the West Frisians. He is succeeded by his one-and-a-half year old son Florens V. After a period of guardianship Florens becomes a powerful ruler.
- 1274 Florens V quells a revolt of peasants.
- 1280–1 In Bruges and Ypres craft-guilds (weavers) rise against the patricians, who seek support from the French king.
- 1283–8 Brabant and Guelders fight each other in the Limburg war of succession. On the side of Brabant are: Holland, Gulik, Cleves and the burghers of Cologne; on the side of Guelders are: Flanders, Luxemburg and the archbishop of Cologne.
- 1288 Battle of Woeringen. John I of Brabant acquires the Duchy of Limburg and gains control over the overland route between Cologne and the North Sea.
John of Nassau, bishop elect of Utrecht, grants an indulgence for the construction of the Utrecht cathedral.
- 1289 Florens V subjects West Frisia and by doing so revenges the death of his father.
- 1296 Florens V, up till now pro-English, takes the side of the French king. He is murdered near Muiderberg by a conspiracy of noblemen at the instigation of Edward I. The twelve-year-old ailing John I succeeds under the regency of John II of Avesnes. In 1299 John II becomes the first count of the House of Hainault.
- 1297 By blockading the wool supply Edward I forces count Guy of Flanders to renounce his vassalage to king Philip IV. Patricians flee to France. A French army enters Flanders and captures Guy and his sons.
- 1299 John II of Holland manages to shift the English wool staple to Dordrecht.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

JACOB VAN MAERLANT, Fleming, mainly working for patrons in Holland and Utrecht:

- c. 1260 *Alexanders geesten* (*The Deeds of Alexander*), adaptation of Gautier de Châtillon's *Alexandreis*.
 - c. 1261 *Historie van den Grale* and *Merlijns boec*, translations of *Joseph d'Arimathie* and *Merlin* by Robert de Boron.
 - c. 1262 *Torec*, Arthurian romance, probably based on a French example.
 - c. 1264 *Historie van Troyen*, after Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*.
 - c. 1265 *Heimelijkheid der heimelijkheden* (attribution uncertain), translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum*.
 - 1264-9 *Der naturen bloeme*, adaptation of Thomas Cantimpratensis' *De naturis rerum*.
 - 1271 *Scolastica*, verse translation of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scolastica* and Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*.
 - 1273 *Sint Franciscus leven*, verse translation of St. Bonaventura's *Legenda maior*.
 - 1281-8 *Spiegel historiael*, an (unfinished) history of the world until the year 1250, based on Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*.
- Among several other stanzaic poems Maerlant writes *Vanden lande van Oversee* (*On the Land across the Sea*), a reaction to the Fall of Acre.

The following works are of Flemish origin:

- DIEDERIK VAN ASSENEDE, *Floris ende Blanche-flor*, adaptation of *Floire et Blancheflor*.
- WILLEM, *Van den vos Reynaerde*. *Madoc*, a work by the same writer, is lost.
- The so-called 'Flemish *Rose*' (fragments), freely rendered from the *Roman de la Rose*.
- De natuurskunde van het heelal*, a didactic poem on cosmology and natural phenomena.

Of (probable) Brabantine origin are:

- Lorreenen*; only fragments remain of this voluminous Charlemagne romance, based on the *Geste des Loherains*.
- Die Rose*, another translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, written by an unknown Hein.
- JAN VAN HEELU, *Rijmkroniek van Woeringen* (c. 1290), a heroic record of the Battle of Woeringen.
- DUKE JOHN I OF BRABANT (1267-94), nine lovesongs, solely preserved in German manuscripts.
- Leven van Sint Lutgart* (c. 1270), free adaptation of Thomas Cantimpratensis' *Vita Lutgardis*. Attributed to WILLEM VAN AFFLIGHEN.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

- VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS, *Speculum triplex* (c. 1250) (= *Speculum historiale*, *Speculum naturale*, *Speculum doctrinale*).
- JACOBUS DE VORAGINE, *Legenda aurea* (c. 1290).

French literature:

- RUTEBEUF (Paris, 1245-80), *Complainte de Sainte Eglise* and other satirical poems.
- JEAN DE MEUN completes the *Roman de la Rose* (1269-78) and translates Boethius' *De consolacione Philosophiae*.
- ADAM DE LA HALLE (composer and poet, member of the Puy d'Arras), *Jeu de Robin et Marion* (c. 1280).
- ADENET LE ROI (employed by Henry III of Brabant and Guy of Dampierre respectively), *Berte aus grans piés*, *Enfances Ogier* and other *chansons de geste*.
- Anonymous: many *fabliaux* and *Mary legends*.

1300–1350 *The age of Velthem and Boendale*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Boniface VIII (1294–1303); he is succeeded by French popes residing in Avignon, one of them is John XXII (1316–34).

German Empire: Albert I of Austria (1298–1308); Henry VII (1308–13); Louis IV of Bavaria (House of Wittelsbach) (1313–47); Charles IV of Luxemburg (1347–78).

France: Philip IV (the Fair) (1285–1314); Philip VI (House of Valois) (1328–50).

England: Edward I (1272–1307); Edward II (1307–27); Edward III (1327–77).

- 1302 The conflict between Pope Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair culminates in the enactment of the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* in which the pope states his claim of universal sovereignty.
- 1303 Pope Boniface imprisoned in Anagni by order of Philip the Fair. Boniface goes insane and dies.
- 1307 Philip the Fair orders execution of the members of the Order of Templars.
- 1309 Under the influence of France Pope Clement V moves the papal residence to Avignon. The 'Babylonian exile' of the papacy lasts until 1377.
- 1311–12 Council of Vienne bans the way of life of beghards and beguines and dissolves the Order of Templars.
- 1339–1453 Hundred Years War. The war breaks out when England is not willing to abandon Gascony. The first hostilities take place in the Low Countries. Edward III enters into an alliance with Brabant, Holland-Hainault, Guelders, Austria and Emperor Louis.
- 1340 Edward III makes a pact with Flanders and proclaims himself king of France in Ghent.
In the sea battle at Sluys the French fleet is destroyed.
- 1346 Edward III defeats the French feudal army at Crécy.
- 1347 Edward III besieges Calais, which eventually surrenders.
- 1347–50 First wave of the Black Death.
- 1349 Persecution of Jews in Germany.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Guy of Dampierre (1278–1305); Robert de Béthune (1305–22); Louis de Nevers (1322–46); Louis de Mâle (1346–84).

Brabant: John II (1294–1312); John III (1312–55).

Utrecht: Guy of Avesnes (1301–17); Frederick I of Sierck (1317–22); John III of Diest (1322–40); John IV of Arkel (1342–64).

Holland: John II of Avesnes (1299–1304); William III (1304–37); William IV (1337–45); Margaret of Bavaria (wife of emperor Louis IV) (1345–54).

Guelders: Reinoud I (1271–1326); Reinoud II (1326–43); Reinoud III (1343–61).

- 1300 Annexation of Flanders by France; Jacques de Châtillon, count of St Pol, appointed French governor.
- 1302 'Matins of Bruges': the rebellious population drives the French garrison at Bruges away. Battle of the Spurs: near Courtrai the French feudal army is defeated by Flemish townsmen.
- 1304 Battle of Pevelenberg: Philip the Fair takes revenge for his defeat at Courtrai.
- 1305 Peace of Athis-sur-Orge: some of the conditions are humiliating for Flanders, but at least it regains its independence.
- 1323 West Flemish peasants rise against the French king and the count of Flanders; quenched in 1328.
- 1326–7 John of Beaumont, brother of William III of Holland, leads an expedition to England to enthrone Edward III (Edward is married to a sister of William III).
- 1338 Jacob of Artevelde, the leader of the guilds of Ghent, brings about the resumption of the English wool supply. In exchange for this Flanders holds a neutral position in the English–French conflict.
- 1340 Count Louis de Nevers takes refuge in Paris. Edward III proclaimed king of France in Ghent.
- 1345 William IV of Holland is killed in a battle with the Frisians.
- 1346 William V (son of Louis IV of Bavaria and Countess Margaret, sister of William IV) becomes regent of Holland. He is the first count of the Bavarian dynasty. His accession to the throne marks the beginning of a long struggle for power between the Hainault and Bavarian Houses.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

LODEWIJK VAN VELTHEM, probably studied in Paris; successively vicar in Sichem near Diest (1304), parish priest in Velthem near Leuven (1312), and (c. 1316) possibly employed by Gerard van Voorne.

1315 Velthem finishes the *Vierde Partie* (until 1256) of Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael* (c. 1300 Philip Utenbroeke had translated the Second Part, skipped by Maerlant).

1316 *Vijfde Partie* (covering the period 1256–1316), Continuation of the *Spiegel historiael*.

1326 *Boec van Coninc Artur*, translation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*, and as such a continuation of Maerlant's *Merlijns boec*.

Velthem is the owner, and maybe also the compiler, of the Dutch *Lancelot Compilation*.

JAN VAN BOENDALE, sheriff's clerk in Antwerp; d. 1365.

1316 *Brabantsche yesten*, history of Brabant.

1330 *Der leken spiegel* (*The Laymen's Mirror*), compendium of Christian doctrine, including an *ars poetica*.

1340 *Van den derden Eduwaert*, short verse chronicle of Edward III's actions in the Low Countries.

MELIS STOKKE, clerk at the chancery of Holland.
c. 1310 *Rijmkroniek van Holland*, history of the counts of Holland until 1305, dedicated to William III.

Secular verse narrative:

Roman van Heinric ende Margriete van Limborch (between c. 1290 and 1318; by HEINRIC): romantic adventures of the Limburg Duke Henry IV and his sister Margaret in Outremer.

Madelgijs and Hughe van Bourdeus (both frags.), based on Old French *chansons de geste*.

Die borchgravinne van Vergi (1315): one of the two Middle Dutch translations of the *Châtelaine de Vergi*.

Die borchgrave van Couchi (fragm.), distantly related to the Old French *Roman du châtelain de Couci et de la dame de Faël*.

Secular prose narrative

Translation of the *Lancelot en prose* (fragm.), the oldest secular prose narrative in Middle Dutch.

Didactic poems

Among others a verse *Melibeus* (Antwerp, 1342) and the *Boec van der Wraken* (*The Book of Revenge*).

A great number of anonymous *legends* (e.g. *Beatrijs*), *tales*, *fabliaux* and *songs*.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

Gesta Romanorum (c. 1350), collection of anecdotes combined with allegorical interpretations.

JACOPONE DA TODI (d. 1306), *Stabat mater*.

JOHANNES DE BEKA, *Chronicon* (1350): history of the Netherlands, dedicated to the Utrecht bishop John of Arkel and William V of Bavaria-Holland.

French literature:

JEAN DE JOINVILLE, *Vie de St. Louis* (1309).

RUSTICELLO DE PISE, *Le Livre des merveilles du monde*: the travel memories of MARCO POLO.

JACQUES DE LONGUYON, *Les Voeux du Paon*. Alexander romance that introduces the theme of the Nine Worthies ('Neuf Preux').

GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT (1300–77), many narrative poems. Also the composer-poet of many *ballades*, *virelais* and *chansons*.

GERVAIS DU BUS, *Fauvel* (1310–14).

Anonymous: many *dits*; *Les Miracles de Notre Dame* (dramatized *Mary legends*).

German literature:

Meister ECKHARDT (d. 1328), TAULER (d. 1361), SUSO (d. 1366).

Italian literature:

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Vita nuova* (1309), *La Divina Commedia* (1307–21).

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *Il Filostrato*, *Decamerone* (1348–53).

PETRARCA, *Canzoniere* (1366); crowned as *poeta laureatus* in 1341.

1350–1400 *The age of Ruusbroec and Hildegaeersberch*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Innocent VI (1352–62); Urban V (1362–70). After the Schism in 1378: pope Urban VI in Rome recognized by England and the German Empire; antipope Clement VII, residing in Avignon, is recognized by France, Spain and Scotland.

German Empire: Charles IV of Luxemburg (1346–78) predominantly residing in Prague; Wenceslas of Bohemia (1378–1400).

France: John II (1350–64); Charles V (the Wise) (1364–80); Charles VI (the Foolish) (1380–1422).

England: Edward III (1327–77); Richard II (1377–99).

- 1357 Turks capture Adrianople: the Byzantine Empire begins to fall apart.
- 1358 Jacquerie: the French peasant revolt.
- 1360 After some disastrous campaigns and revolts John II of France enters into a treaty with Edward III at Brétigny. Edward III gives up his claims to the French crown but retains extensive territories in France.
- 1362 The English parliament decides that all pleas must be conducted in English.
- 1363 John II of France gives the Duchy of Burgundy to his son Philip the Bold (who marries Margaret de Mâle of Flanders in 1369): foundation of the Burgundian dynasty.
- 1369 New outbreak of the Hundred Years War. Emperor John V Paleologue of Byzantium travels in vain to Italy and France to call for aid in the war against the Turks.
- 1369–92 Tamerlane, ruler of the Mongols, conquers Central Asia, India, Syria and Turkey.
- 1378 Great Schism of the Western Church.
- 1381 The Peasants' Revolt in England.
- 1382–92 Turks take Bulgaria, until then part of the Byzantine Empire.
- 1382 John Wycliffe, preacher of an evangelical Christianity, expelled from Oxford. Lollards persecuted.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Louis de Mâle (1346–84); Margaret de Mâle (1384–1404), married to Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy.

Brabant: John III (1312–55); Joanna (1355–1406), married Wenceslas of Luxemburg.

Utrecht: John IV of Arkel (1342–64); Frederick of Blankenheim (1393–1423).

Holland: Margaret (1345–54); William V (1354–8); Albert of Bavaria (1358–1404).

Guelders: Reinoud III (1343–61); Edward (1361–71); William of Gulik (1372–1402).

- 1350 First outburst of the Hainault–Bavarian struggles, which are to flare up time and again until c. 1450.
- 1351 William V defeats his mother, Empress Margaret, in a sea battle.
- 1354 William V recognized as count of Holland.
- 1356 Joanna and Wenceslas of Brabant swear to the 'Blijde Inkomste', a kind of constitution of the duchy.
- 1358 William V of Holland attested insane; his brother Albert I, duke of Bavaria, rules as *ruwaard* (regent).
- 1369 Countess Margaret of Flanders marries Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy.
- 1371 Duke Wenceslas of Brabant taken prisoner in the battle at Baesweiler by the dukes of Guelders and Gulik.
- 1382 Rebellion in Ghent led by Philip of Artevelde. The pro-French patricians (*Leljaerts*) massacred. Intervention of Charles VI, who defeats the army of Philip of Artevelde at Roosebeke.
- 1385 William VI, heir to the throne of Holland, marries Margaret of Burgundy, daughter of Philip the Bold.
- 1386 Foundation of the Windesheim monastery near Zwolle: it is to become the centre of the *Devotio Moderna*.
- 1389 Death of William V; he is succeeded by Albert I of Bavaria.
- 1392 Aleid van Poelgeest, mistress of Albert I, murdered. Party struggles break out again.
- 1396–1400 Holland undertakes three military expeditions to subject the Frisians.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

JAN VAN RUUSBROEC (1293-1381) is priest in Brussels, hermit in the Zoniënbos (a forest outside Brussels), and finally prior of the Groenendaal monastery. One of his main works, *Die geestelike brulocht* (*The Spiritual Espousals*), is an exposition of the principles of mysticism.

GEERT GROTE (1340-84) is converted after a worldly life in 1374. He is the founder of a community of religious women, the Sisters of the Common Life, and a new form of piety, the *Devotio Moderna*. Most of his work is in Latin, except for his Book of Hours (*Getijdenboek*).

'Bible Translator of 1360', an anonymous conventual (a Carthusian from the abbey of Herne), renders a substantial part of the Latin Bible in Middle Dutch. The prose translation is known as the *Bible of 1360*.

Some important speakers (sprooksprekers):

WILLEM VAN HILDEGAERSBERCH, active mainly at the court of the count of Holland in The Hague between 1375 and 1408. His oeuvre comprises 120 tales, including allegories, satires and exempla.

Another speaker is AUGUSTIJNKEN, who performed his poems at many courts in the period 1358-75.

Work of other speakers as well as love poetry is preserved in the The Hague Song Manuscript, possibly made for the court at The Hague.

Also at that court: the BAVARIA HERALD (Heraut Beyeren), also known as the GUELDERNS HERALD. In his *Wapenboec* he gives a heraldic survey of the European aristocracy and knighthood of his days and glorifies their deeds.

Dating from the same period:

Reynaerts Historie (c. 1400), continuation of the beast epic *Van den vos Reynaerde*.

The Gruuthuse Manuscript, containing prayers, songs and (mainly allegorical) poems. Compiled in Bruges c. 1400 and used there in a circle of burghers writing poetry and composing music.

De abele spelen, the oldest Middle Dutch secular plays, preserved in the Hulthem manuscript (Brussels, c. 1410); each play is linked up with a *sotternie*, a short farce.

De reis van Jan van Mandeville, translation of the French *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

French literature:

EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS (1346-1407), *L'Art de dictier, Miroir de mariage*.

JEAN FROISSART, *Chroniques* (1373-92).

PHILIPPE DE MÉZIÈRES, *Le Songe du vieil pèlerin* (1389).

JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, *Voyage d'Outre Mer* (c. 1360), soon translated in many languages.

English literature:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (d. 1400), *Book of the Duchess* (c. 1370), *House of Fame* (c. 1379), *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385), *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1385-1400).

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (c. 1390).

GOWER, *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390).

WILLIAM LANGLAND, *Piers Plowman* (c. 1367-86).

1400–1450 *The age of Dirc Potter and Dirc van Delft*

EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND

Popes: Weak popes and antipopes. The papacy is the plaything of the worldly powers.

German Empire: Ruprecht of the Palatinate (1400–10); Sigismund (1410–37); Albert II (1438–9); Frederick III (1440–93).

France: Charles VI (1380–1422), insane after 1392; Charles VII (1422–61), reigns from Bourges.

England: Henry IV (1399–1413); Henry V (1413–22); Henry VI (1422–61), insane after 1453.

- 1407 Duke Louis of Orléans, brother and counsellor of King Charles VI, assassinated by stooges of John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy. Civil war in France between Armagnacs (supporters of Orléans) and Bourguignons (the Burgundians).
- 1409 Council of Pisa. Two reigning popes deposed and a third is elected: Alexander V (dies in 1410 and is succeeded by John XXIII).
- 1411 Pope John XXIII excommunicates John Hus (Prague). In 1415 Hus is burnt as a heretic. Hussite War in Bohemia (1419–36).
- 1414–18 Council of Constance: *causa unionis*, *causa reformationis*, *causa fidei*. End of the Great Schism of the Western Church.
- 1415 Invasion of France by Henry V of England. Henry defeats the French army at Agincourt. The Duke of Burgundy recognizes Henry V as king of France.
- 1416 Venetians defeat the Turkish fleet at Gallipoli.
- 1419 John the Fearless murdered by followers of the *dauphin*, the later King Charles VII.
- 1421–43 Expansion of Burgundy's power (with England as ally): Flanders (since 1384), Namur (1421), Brabant-Limburg (1430), Hainault-Holland-Zeeland (1428–33) and Luxemburg (1443).
- 1429–31 Appearance of Joan of Arc. She forces the English to raise the siege of Orléans and leads Charles VII to Reims where he is crowned king. Captured at Compiègne in 1430, Joan is burnt at Rouen in 1431.
- 1431 Portuguese navigators discover the Azores.
- 1431 Henry VI crowned king of France. In the subsequent years the English lose territory until there is nothing left but Calais (1453).
- 1431–49 Council of Basle. Central issue: who has the highest authority in the Church, the pope or the council?

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders: Philip the Bold of Burgundy (1384–1404); John the Fearless (1404–19); Philip the Good (1419–67).

Brabant: Joanna (1355–1406); Anthony of Burgundy (1406–15), brother of John the Fearless; John IV (1415–27); Philip of St Pol (1427–30); Philip the Good (1430–67).

Utrecht: Frederick of Blankenheim (1393–1423); Zweder of Culemborg (1425–32); Rudolf of Diepholt (1432–56).

Holland: Albert I (1358–1404); William VI (1404–17); Jacqueline of Bavaria (1417–33); John of Bavaria (1418–25); Philip the Good (1433–67).

Guelders: Reinoud IV (1402–23); Arnold of Egmond (1423–65).

- 1415 Anthony of Burgundy, duke of Brabant, is killed at Agincourt.
- 1418 John IV of Brabant marries Jacqueline of Bavaria, countess of Hainault, Holland and Zeeland.
- 1421 St Elisabeth's Flood inundates a vast area east of Dordrecht (nowadays known as the Biesbos).
- 1422 John IV of Brabant bargains away the territories of his wife Jacqueline of Bavaria to her opponent John of Bavaria. Jacqueline marries Humphrey of Gloucester in order to seek support against John.
- 1425 John IV founds Louvain University, the oldest in the Low Countries.
- 1425 John of Bavaria dies (poisoned by Jacqueline?); Philip the Good appointed as heir. After three years of resistance Jacqueline has to recognize Philip as regent at the Peace Treaty of Delft (1428).
- 1423–33 The Utrecht Schism: bishop elect Rudolf of Diepholt, elected by the chapter in 1423, controls the *Oversticht* (the modern Provinces of Groningen, Drenthe and Overijssel) whereas bishop Zweder of Culembourg, supported by Burgundy and appointed by the pope in 1425, rules over the *Nedersticht* (the Province of Utrecht).
- 1429 Philip the Good institutes the Order of the Golden Fleece.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

DIRC POTTER (c. 1370–1428), works as secretary at the chancery of the count of Holland in The Hague. He travels to Rome (1411–12) and accomplishes several other diplomatic missions.

Der minnen loep, a course of instruction for lovers, divided into four books (in verse).

Blome der doechden (*Flowers of Virtue*), a system of virtues with exempla (in prose).

Mellibeus, a (prose) dialogue on religious and ethical questions.

DIRC VAN DELFT, dominican in Utrecht, doctor of theology and court preacher in The Hague.

Tafel vanden kersten ghelove (1404), (prose) compendium of Christian doctrine.

Writers from the circle of the Devotia Moderna, e.g.:

GERARD ZERBOLT VAN ZUTPHEN.

HENDRIK MANDE, author of mystical writings.

In the circles of the *Devotia Moderna* the *spiritual song* (often a *contrafact* of a profane song) was very popular.

Religious drama:

Mystery plays: e.g. the seven *Bliscappen van Maria* (*The Seven Joys of Mary*), put on stage annually in Brussels from 1448 onwards.

Chambers of rhetoric:

The earliest records of chambers of rhetoric date from this period (e.g. Bruges, Ypres, Ghent, Antwerp).

Artes literature:

Many, mainly anonymous, prose writings on different aspects of the *artes* date back to this period. These texts present scientific knowledge for non-specialists.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

THOMAS À KEMPIS (1380–1471), *De imitatione Christi*, a companion to a devout life.

AENEAS SILVIUS PICCOLOMINI (diplomat, humanist, and pope between 1458–64), *Euryalus et Lucretia* (novella).

French literature:

CHRISTINE DE PISAN, *Cité des dames* (1404–5) and other didactic poems.

ALAIN CHARTIER (c. 1385–1435), *La Prison amoureuse*, *Livre des quatre dames*, *La Belle Dame sans merci*.

Extensive cycles of passion and mystery plays in Paris, Arras and elsewhere.

English literature:

Mystery cycles in York (oldest reference 1387). Similar cycles in, e.g., Wakefield and Chester.

1450–1500 *The age of Anthonis de Roovere and Colijn van Rijsssele*

EUROPE AND THE NEW WORLD

Popes: Nicolas V (1447–55); Pius II (Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, 1458–64).
German Empire: Frederick III (1440–93); Maximilian I (1493–1519).

France: Charles VII (1422–61); Louis XI (1461–83); Charles VIII (1483–98); Louis XII (1498–1515).

England: Henry VI (1422–61); Edward IV (1461–83, House of York); Richard III (1483–5); Henry VII (1485–1509, House of Tudor).

- 1453 Fall of Constantinople. Many Greek scholars flee from the Turks to Italy.
- 1453 End of the Hundred Years War.
- 1456–9 The Turks conquer Greece and part of the Balkans.
- 1455–85 'War of the Roses': the houses of Lancaster and York dispute the English throne.
- 1461–83 Louis XI of France settles scores with his most important vassals and lays the foundation for the absolute monarchy.
- 1469–92 Reign of Lorenzo de' Medici, *Il Magnifico*, in Florence.
- 1483–5 The English youthful crown prince and his brother are killed in the Tower (possibly at the instigation of Richard III). Richard is deposed by Henry VII, the first sovereign of the House of Tudor.
- 1487 Bartholomew Diaz rounds the Cape of Good Hope.
- 1492 Christopher Columbus, in the service of Isabella of Castile, discovers America.
- 1498 Vasco da Gama discovers the sea route to the East Indies and India. Columbus reaches the continent of South America. Henry Cabot discovers Labrador.
- 1499 Amerigo Vespucci discovers Guyana and Venezuela.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

Flanders, Brabant, Holland: Philip the Good (1419–67); Charles the Bold (1467–77); Mary the Rich (1477–82), wife of Maximilian I; Philip the Fair (1482–1506).

Utrecht: David of Burgundy (1456–96), bastard of Philip the Good.

Guelders: Arnold of Egmond (1423–65, 1471–3); Adolf (1465–71); 1473–92 under Burgundian rule; Charles of Egmond (1492–1538).

- 1454 Philip the Good and his courtiers swear to conduct a crusade against the Turks (*Voeu du faisan*).
- 1468 Charles the Bold captures the principality and bishopric of Liège. He marries Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV of England.
- 1473 Charles the Bold negotiates in vain with Emperor Frederick III on a regal title. He conquers the duchy of Guelders.
- 1475 Charles the Bold overruns the duchy of Lorraine; he concludes the peace with Frederick III. A marriage between Frederick's son Maximilian and Mary, daughter of Charles, is arranged.
- 1477 Charles the Bold killed near Nancy in a battle with the allied Swiss, Lorraine and Alsatian armies.
- 1482–94 Maximilian rules for his little son Philip the Fair.
- 1488 Rebellion of Flemish towns in Ghent, led by John Coppenhole.
- 1491–2 Revolt of peasants in the area of Haarlem, suppressed by regent Albert of Bavaria.

MIDDLE DUTCH LITERATURE

ANTHONIS DE ROOVERE (d. 1482). *Factor* (leading poet) of the chamber of rhetoric 'De Heilige Gheest' (The Holy Ghost) in Bruges. Writer of lyrical poems, plays and *Vander Moltenfeeste* (*The Mole Party*; in the tradition of the *dance macabre*).

COLIJN VAN RIJSSELE, probably the same person as Colijn Keyaert, town poet in Brussels before 1485 and author of the mythological plays *Narcissus ende Echo* and *Yupiter ende Yo*. Main work: *De spiegel der minnen* (*The Mirror of Love*), a tragic love play.

Many rhetoricians of this period are known by name, but most *refreinen*, *spelen van sinne* and *kluchten* (farces) are transmitted anonymously. Two well-known plays are:

Elckerlijc (first printed in 1495), attributed to PETRUS VAN DIEST. Translated into English as *Everyman*; the play is twice rendered into Latin.

Mariken van Nieumeghen (1515), translated into English as *Mary of Nimmeghen* (1518). Whether it is a play in this form (a mixture of prose and verse) is not clear.

Secular prose in print:

Historie des conincs Alexander (Gouda, Gheraert Leeu, 1477).

Historien van Troyen (Gouda, Leeu, 1479).

Historie van Reynaert die Vos (Gouda, Leeu, 1479). English translation by William Caxton in 1481.

Leeu prints the verse adaptation of *Reinaerts historie* written by HINREK VAN ALCKMER (Antwerp, c. 1487–90). This verse incunabulum is the source for the Low German *Reinke de Vos* (Lübeck, 1498).

Religious prose:

Die bible in Duytsche (Delft, 1477). First printed vernacular Bible translation.

Authors of religious works: JAN BRUGMAN (d. 1473), HENDRIK HERP (d. 1477) and others.

Lyric:

Numerous *historical songs*.

Spiritual songs in the circles of the *Devotia Moderna*.

SUSTER BERTKEN (1427–1514), female recluse in Utrecht and writer of religious songs.

EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Latin literature:

Italian humanists like LORENZO VALLA (d. 1457), GIOVANNI POGGIO (1380–1459), PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA (1463–94).

Humanists in the north: DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (1466–1536), WESSEL GANSFORT (1420–89), RUDOLPHUS AGRICOLA (1442–85).

French literature:

FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431–63), *Le Petit Testament*, *Le Grand Testament* and *ballades*.

PHILIPPE DE COMMINES, *Mémoires* (1489–98).

English literature:

SIR THOMAS MALORY, *The Morte Darthur* (1485). Adaptation of the trilogy *Lancelot-Queste-Mort Artu* and other Arthurian subject matter.

German literature:

SEBASTIAN BRANT, *Das Narrenschiff* (1494).

HARTMANN SCHEDEL, *Weltchronik* (1493), printed in a German and a Latin version.

Index

In this index all Middle Dutch and the majority of other authors and works mentioned in the text have been included, as well as most of the rulers of the Low Countries and a number of other contemporary people. As a rule persons have been listed by their surnames; classical authors, however, the most important members of the aristocracy, popes and saints by their Christian names. Titles of literary works beginning with an article have been listed on the second word. Finally, a small selection of subjects has been included as well.

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